70 PRINCESS STREET

BOLE DRUG COMPANY WAREHOUSE

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
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Winnipeg in the early 1890s was, although few realized it, on the verge of a spectacular era of growth, development and maturity that would create, by World War I, a large, modern city with all the amenities. But this comprehensive growth followed patterns established decades earlier and resulted in specific districts within city boundaries even after this frenzied period of growth.

The real estate and construction boom of the early 1880s was intimately connected to the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) around Winnipeg and onto the western prairies. Land prices in the small capital city skyrocketed, the population soared and solid brick structures began replacing the small wooden shacks that dotted the mud streets. This development led to the creation of specific districts within the city – residential, commercial and industrial – and their related building-types. The huge advance in land prices along Main Street north of Portage Avenue necessitated the replacement of the earlier residential development with large commercial structures. Investors chose to locate near one of the most important buildings, City Hall, from which would come assistance in advancing both singular business interests and those of the community at large.

Commercial interests, both local and from Eastern Canada, were quick to locate in this area. The city rapidly assumed the role of wholesale hub for all of Western Canada, partially because of its central location and partially because of the preferential freight rates negotiated with the CPR that made it cheaper for manufacturers to ship their goods to Winnipeg, unload them and then send them west to the growing markets on the prairies. Companies like G.F. and J. Galt Company, Stobart, Eden and Company and J.H. Ashdown were all organized and carrying on business prior to the CPR boom. The bust of 1882, while it seriously affected some parts of the local economy, did not have a devastating effect on the wholesale sector. This was mainly as a result of the expanding regional base of the wholesalers as settlement increased on the prairies and demand for goods grew. The areas east and west of Main Street, however, were undeniably

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developing as the warehouse district, slowly through the 1880s and 1890s and then rapidly after 1900 (Plate 1).

In 1903, the Bole Drug Company built a large, handsome, five-storey warehouse in the southwest corner of the warehouse district, beginning many decades of activity in the area (Plates 2 and 3).

**STYLE**

This warehouse is an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival style, very popular in warehouse districts throughout North America from the 1880s well into the 20th century. The buildings were nearly always solid brick with a raised basement and featuring rusticated stone accenting around windows and doors and at roof level. Other elements included towers flanking the main façade, quoins, belt courses, corbelled brick panels, chevrons and flat rooflines, with or without cornices and entablatures. The most obvious feature of the style was the use of the arch above openings. Often, straight-topped windows located on the middle storeys were grouped under large arches on the upper floors.\(^2\) Although the style was applied to private residences and on large public buildings, in Winnipeg it was almost exclusively used in the warehouse district, where the designs were somewhat more subdued. The massiveness and sturdiness of the style appealed to wholesalers looking to promote their businesses and portray the stability of their firms through the design of the structures they occupied.

**CONSTRUCTION**

This five-storey brick and stone building rests on a rubblestone foundation 71.1 centimetres thick. The solid brick walls of the superstructure are 55.9 centimetres thick on the ground floor and 43.2 centimetres thick on the upper four floors.\(^3\) Ceiling range from 2.7 metres in the basement to 4.0


\(^3\) *City of Winnipeg Assessment Record*, Roll No. 609700-12-2, PC 50.
metres on the ground floor, 3.4 metres on the 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3.1 metres on the 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2.7 metres on the 4\textsuperscript{th} and 2.7-3.7 metres on the top floor (see Appendix I for more technical information).\textsuperscript{4}

A penthouse was added in 1915.\textsuperscript{5}

This warehouse was built using the most common construction method of the time – the mill system – a square timber beam and post support network where beams were attached to the solid brick exterior walls and covered by wood plank flooring and often a hardwood finish. This was a very popular system in warehouse districts throughout North America because of its sturdiness, the ease of adding additional storeys and its ability to suffer fire damage and not collapse. The Bole Drug Company Warehouse is one of many mill construction structures in the Exchange District.

**DESIGN**

As originally designed and built, the ground floor of the main (east) façade was clad in stone-rusticated from grade to the sills of the display windows and smooth-cut above, pillar like with modest stone capitals. These pillars “supported” the wide smooth-cut stone band and modest cornice that visually separated the ground floor from the brick superstructure above. The three display windows in the centre of the building were framed by two large, square-headed openings – the southern opening an interior loading dock with stone bollards and the northern opening the main entrance with its pediment and classical detailing (Plate 4). All openings on the ground floor were finished with matching, multi-paned transoms. The upper floors continued the five-bay layout; the outer bays on floors 2 and 3 featured square-headed window openings with stone sills and wide stone heads and stone sills and radiating brick heads with corbelled brick hoods, seldom seen in the warehouse district, on the fourth floor. The centre three bays contained paired windows; square-headed with wide stone heads and stone sills on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} floors and arched with raised brick drip moulding on the 4\textsuperscript{th}. A band of corbelled brick separated the

\textsuperscript{4} Loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{5} *City of Winnipeg Building Permit* (below as BP), #925/1915.
4th floor from the 5th, which included circular windows in the outer bays and paired, square-headed window openings with corbelled brick accenting in the middle bays. The façade was finished by a wide corbelled brick section leading to the stepped brick and stone parapet with central signage panel. It was, for 1903, one of the more detailed and attractive designs in the warehouse district.

Since construction several changes have been made to this façade. The main entrance was remodelled in 1959,6 the windows replaced in 19687 (Plate 5). The south end loading dock was removed, filled with a large display window and basement windows which have since been closed with cinder blocks.

The blank south elevation is partially covered by the neighbouring building; painted signage is located at the top with faintly seen behind the “Canadian Goodwill Industries” sign is advertising for “National Drug Company” (Plate 6). 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 (Plates 7 and 8).

**INTERIOR**

As originally designed, the interior likely followed contemporary layouts – public space and offices at the front of the ground floor, loading/unloading at the rear and open warehouse space in the upper floors. A dumbwaiter (Plate 9) and freight/passenger elevators serviced all floors.

Today, the basement is used for storage and includes the original boiler encased in brick (not in use), a coal room with curved concrete ceilings and a vault with painted door. The ground floor is used for retail space and includes high ceilings and a walk-in vault (Plates 10 and 11). The second floor has been divided into offices and retail space, the latter features ornamental tin ceilings (Plate 12). The upper three floors are generally open warehouse space with the exposed timber beams,

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6 BP #3675/1959.
7 BP #7499/1968.
posts and flooring of a typical pre-World War I warehouse of mill construction (Plates 13 and 14). Metal connecting hardware (Plate 15) and the fact that the subfloor does not consist of lumber set on edge are two unusual construction features.

**INTEGRITY**
The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition for its age. It has seen a number of exterior alterations, especially to the ground floor, although many of the design elements of the upper storeys remain intact.

**STREETSCEAPE**
This structure is located in the Exchange District National Historic Site (EDNHS). It has been part of the Princess Street streetscape for over 100 years (Plates 16 and 17). Because all buildings within the EDNHS are essential parts of their historic streetscapes, the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee has given them 60 points.

**ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS**
J.H.G. Russell, a well-known local architect, was responsible for the design of this warehouse (Plate 18). He set up a private practice in 1895 and for nearly half a century designed some of Winnipeg’s finest buildings (see Appendix I for biographical information). He has been given 20 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.

Contractor for the building was the well-known local firm Malcom Brothers and S.B. Ritchie. Malcom Brothers was founded in 1900 as a general contracting firm by brothers David (1871-1935), John and William. The three had begun a brickyard in their hometown of Owen Sound, Ontario along with two other brothers in the 1880s but the three moved to Winnipeg in 1892.

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Working as stonemasons and bricklayers, the three ultimately formed the contracting firm that would become the Malcom Construction Company. The firm was responsible for many fine Winnipeg structures as well as completing contracts in rural Manitoba, northwestern Ontario and Western Canada. In 1908, William returned to Owen Sound, and by 1918, when Malcom Construction Company Limited was incorporated, David Malcom had assumed control. After his death in 1935, the firm was operated by his son, Wilbert Guy (Bert) Malcom (1895-1980) until his retirement in 1974. The company was still family owned and operated (by W.G. Malcom’s son David) and still active in the construction scene into the 1990s.

A list of their larger local contracts includes:

Augustine Presbyterian Church, 444 River Avenue, 1903
Bole Drug Company Warehouse, 70 Princess Street, 1903
Winnipeg Lodging and Coffee House, 175-81 Logan Avenue, 1905 (demolished)
Augustine Presbyterian School, Royal Street (now Pulford Street), 1909
Fort Rouge Methodist Church, 525 Wardlaw Avenue, 1910
R.J. Whita and Company Building, 70 Arthur Street, large addition, 1911
Edward Brown House, Wellington Crescent, 1912 (demolished)
Wesley College (University of Winnipeg), 515 Portage Avenue, large addition, 1912
R.R. Wilson House, Wellington Crescent, 1924

Sinclair Balsor Ritchie (1855-1933) was born in Nova Scotia in 1855, although he learned the trade of carpentry in New Brunswick. He came to Winnipeg in 1879, working as a foreman with lumber dealers Brown and Rutherford. Soon after, he established a construction company, Ritchie and McCloy (D.E.), prior to operating his own firm. A long-time Winnipeg Beach resident, Ritchie developed Boundary Park in the area, was its mayor from 1915-1920 and built over 200 cottages. Ritchie’s list of work is extensive, some of his more major contracts would include:

Machray School, 350 Charles Street (1886) - demolished
L.A. Hamilton House, 434 Assiniboine Avenue (1894)
Sir Huge John Macdonald House, “Dalnavert”, 61 Carlton Street (1895) – Grade I
Central Fire Hall, 110 Albert Street (1898) – demolished
Hurtig Building, 268 Portage Avenue (1902)

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9 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926.
PERSON/INSTITUTION

David W. Bole (Plate 19), president of Bole Drug Company and National Drug and Chemical Company, was a pioneer wholesaler, born in Lambton County, Canada West (Ontario) in 1856. After training as a pharmacist in Toronto, he came west in 1882, settling in Regina, SA as that community’s first pharmacist.\(^{11}\) Taking on a partner, James R. Wynne, Bole was soon a major drug wholesaler in the region. He came to Winnipeg in 1889, relocating his wholesale drug business and merging with the E.D. Martin Company to form the Martin, Bole and Wynne Drug Company, a major firm that operated out of a business block at Market Avenue and Princess Street (Plate 15) for many years.\(^{12}\) In late 1897 or early 1898, Bole founded his own wholesale drug firm, the Bole Drug Company, locating on Princess Street across from 70 Princess.\(^{13}\)

In ca.1907, Bole launched another business, the National Drug and Chemical Company, which by the 1920s had branches across the country.

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\(^{12}\) Information from [http://www.virtual.heritagewinnipeg.com/vignettes/vignettes_097.htm](http://www.virtual.heritagewinnipeg.com/vignettes/vignettes_097.htm). This building and all of the company’s stock were destroyed by fire in November 1910, *Manitoba Free Press*, November 23, 1910, p. 13.

\(^{13}\) *Manitoba Free Press*, February 24, 1902, p. 8. It was noted in the 1904 local papers that Bole Drug Company was erecting a warehouse in Calgary, AL.
Mr. Bole was also prominent in public life, serving on City Council in 1896, as president of the Winnipeg Board of Trade and as a Member of Parliament in the House of Common from 1904 to 1908. He died in 1933.  

National Drug and Chemical Company of Canada, which became National Drugs in 1933, owned this building until 1948 when it was sold to Canadian Goodwill Industries, although this organization had occupied the building since the 1930s and continues to this day.

Canadian Goodwill was founded in 1931 by Reverend J. Richmond Craig of Grace Methodist Church as a second-hand store using the left-over items from a church rummage sale (Plate 20). His goals were to alleviate unemployment brought on by the Great Depression and to offer goods to Manitobans at low prices. The organization grew, incorporated and today functions under the slogan, “Waste into Wages, Junk into Jobs and Discards into Timecards.”

**EVENT**

There is no known significant historical event connected with this building.

**CONTEXT**

This is one of dozens of large, well-built stone and brick warehouses located within Winnipeg’s wholesale district. Built after the turn-of-the-century, is was another example of a successful local wholesale company, taking advantage of Winnipeg’s geographical location, its development as a railway hub, the availability of capital and the favourable freight rates. All these factors, along with a growing supply of cheap labour, combined to make the city the perfect headquarters for companies looking to supply the consumer demands of the growing population across the western prairies. Many companies, including the Bole Drug Company and the National Drug and

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14 Winnipeg Free Press, January 9, 1904; Legislative Library Newspaper Scrapbooks B1, p.131 and B9, p.46; and “Bole, D.W.,” Legislative Library vertical file.

Chemical Company used these advantages to become major players in their sectors by World War I and beyond.

**LANDMARK**

This large structure is located on a busy downtown street and would be conspicuous in the neighbourhood.
APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report
Assessment Record

Building Address: 70 Princess Street  Building Name: Bole Drug Company Warehouse

Original Use: wholesale drugs  Current Use: clothing store

Roll No. (Old): 609700 (10126)

Municipality: 12  Ward: 2  Property or Occupancy Code: 50

Legal Description: 5/6 St. John, Plan 33144, Lot 43 (Original: 6 St. John, Plan 16, E ½ Lot 3)

Location: west side between Notre Dame & McDermot avenues

Date of Construction: 1903  Storeys: 5

Construction Type: brick – ordinary

HERITAGE STATUS: ON COMMEMORATIVE LIST

Building Permits (Plans available: [CS] City Storage):
- 80/1903 $30,000 (original); 2192/1914 [CS] (alter store); 925/1915 [CS] (construct penthouse for pressure tank); 1956 (loading platform); 3973/1956 [CS] $8,000 (elevator well); 3675/1959 $1,500 (doors); 7499/1968 $9,500 (store alteration); 2719/1993 $20,000 (repairs);

Information:
- 65 x 70 x 70+ = 318,500 cu. ft.
- Front – stone to sills and cut stone to 2nd, balance – clay brick
- Upper wall thickness – 22” – 17” brick
- Basement – 22” rubble stone foundation walls
- Roof penthouse – 9” brick on north & west, balance stud & board
- 1941 – Exterior condition good except crack SW corner
- 1948 Roll – No changes in building
- 1951 – New stairs to 2nd floor – partitions on 2nd
- 1956 - Platform
- Permit 3973/1956 – Elevator well penthouse
- 1961 – Spray room reconstructed with exhaust fan - building in fair shape. New 3000lb Otis elevator
- Permit 3675/1959 – Front entrance remodelled.
- Permit 7499/1968 – New front windows

ARCHITECT: J.H.G. RUSSELL
CONTRACTORS: MALCOM BROTHERS & S.B. RITCHIE
John Hamilton Gordon Russell

J.H.G. Russell was born in Toronto, Canada West (Ontario) in 1862, the son of a dry goods dealer. After attending school in that city, he went to work for H.B. Gordon, a prominent area architect. Russell was with Gordon from 1878 until his departure for Winnipeg in 1882. From 1886 to 1893, Russell travelled throughout the United States, learning civil engineering, surveying and architecture in centres such as Chicago, Illinois, Spokane and Tacoma, Washington, and Sioux City, Iowa.

In 1895, two years after returning to Winnipeg, he set up his private practice, coinciding with the city's period of unbridled growth. His designs were (and are) scattered throughout the city, province and Western Canada, covering a variety of building types, sizes, prices and uses. His business continued to be steady during World War I and after, when many architects struggled to find commissions.

Russell was president of the Manitoba Association of Architects (1925) and served for three terms as the president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (1912-15). His chairmanship of the Presbyterian Church Board of Managers and his devotion to Presbyterianism partially explain the large number of churches he designed for the denomination in Winnipeg and Western Canada. Russell died in 1946.

A complete list of his designs would be lengthy indeed. Many of his earlier works have been demolished and therefore usually are no longer included in inventories of his portfolio.

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3 M. Peterson, op. cit., n.p.
Among his projects were:

Outside Manitoba-
Knox Presbyterian - Prince Albert, Sask.
Knox Presbyterian - Kenora, Ont.
St. Andrews Church - Moose Jaw, Sask.

Manitoba-
Starbuck Presbyterian (United) - 1904
Treherne Presbyterian (United) - 1907-08 (originally Chambers Presbyterian)
Pilot Mound Public School
Killarney Public School
Foxwarren Public School

Winnipeg-
Churches - Augustine Presbyterian (United), 444 River Avenue, 1903-4 (Grade II)
Crescent-Fort Rouge Methodist (United), 525 Wardlaw Avenue, 1906-11
Westminster Presbyterian (United), 745 Westminster Avenue, 1910-12 (Grade II)
Robertson Memorial Presbyterian (United), 648 Burrows Avenue, 1911
Robertson Memorial Presbyterian Institute, Burrows Avenue, 1911
Knox Presbyterian (United), 400 Edmonton Street, 1914-17
Home Street Presbyterian (United), 318 Home Street, 1920
St. John's Presbyterian (United), 250 Cathedral Avenue, 1923 (Grade III)
Riverview Presbyterian (United), 360 Oakwood Avenue, 1925

Residences - J.H.G. Russell, 237 Wellington Crescent, 1902 (demolished)
J.D. McArthur, 159 Mayfair Avenue, 1903
R.R. Wilson, 545 Broadway, 1904 (Grade III)
H. Archibald, 176 Roslyn Road, 1909
Ormsby, 119 Campbell Street, 1910
J.H. Ashdown, 529 Wellington Crescent, 1913 (Grade II)
R.R. Wilson, 680 Wellington Crescent, 1925

Commercial - Addition to J.H. Ashdown Warehouse, 157-179 Bannatyne Avenue, 1899-1911 (Grade II)
Lake of the Woods Building, 212 McDermot Avenue, 1901 (Grade II)
Hammond Building, 63 Albert Street, 1902 (Grade III)
Porter and Company Building, 368 Main Street, 1902-03 (demolished)
McKerchar Block, 600-02 Main Street, 1902-03
Additions to McClary Building, 185 Bannatyne Avenue, 1903 & 1904 (Grade III)
Thomson Block, 499 Main Street, 1903 (demolished)
Winnipeg-
Commercial- (continued)

- Adelman Building, 92-100 Princess Street, 1903 (Grade II)
- Bole Drug Company Warehouse, 70 Princess Street, 1903
- Additions to the Bright and Johnston Building, 141 Bannatyne Avenue, 1903 & 1907 (Grade III)
- Silvester-Willson Building, 222 McDermot Avenue, 1904
- Green and Litster Block, 235-7 Fort Street, 1904 (demolished)
- Franklin Press, 168 Bannatyne Avenue, 1904 (Grade III)
- Addition to Daylite Building, 296 McDermot Avenue, 1904 (Grade II)
- J.H. Ashdown Store, 211 Bannatyne Avenue, 1904 (Grade III)
- Allman Block, 592-4 Main Street, 1904
- Porter Building, 165 McDermot Avenue, 1906 (Grade III)
- Child's (McArthur) Building, Portage Avenue, 1909 (demolished)
- Glengarry Block, 290 McDermot Avenue, 1910 (Grade III)
- Dingwall Building, 62 Albert Street, 1911 (Grade III)
- Great West Permanent Loan Company Building, 356 Main Street, 1912 (demolished)
- Eastman Kodak Building, 287 Portage Avenue, 1930 (demolished)

Other-
- Gladstone School, Pembina Street, 1898 (demolished)
- Casa Loma Block, 644 Portage Avenue, 1909 (Grade II)
- Chatsworth Apartments, 535 McMillan Avenue, 1911
- YMCA, Selkirk Avenue, 1911 (demolished)
- YMCA, 301 Vaughan Street, 1911-13, with Jackson and Rosencrans of New York (Grade II)
- Guelph Apartments, 778 McMillan Avenue, 1912
- Addition to the Marlborough (Olympia) Hotel, 321 Smith St., 1921-23 (Grade II)
- Odd Fellows Home, 4025 Roblin Boulevard, 1922
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Portage Avenue, 1928
- Hugh John Macdonald School, William Avenue, 1929
- Aurora Court Apartments, 543 Ellice Avenue, n.d.
- Central Park Block, 389 Cumberland Avenue, n.d.
- Johnson Apartment Block, 524 Sargent Avenue, n.d.
Plate 1 – Looking south along Arthur Street from Bannatyne Avenue into the heart of Winnipeg’s warehouse district west of Main Street, ca.1905. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg- Views c1905- 2.)
Plate 2 – Sketch of the new Bole Drug Company warehouse, Princess Street, 1903. (Reproduced from the Manitoba Free Press, March 28, 1903, p. 19.)
Plate 3 – Bole Drug Company Warehouse, 70 Princess Street, shortly after construction, ca.1907. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, J.H.G. Russell Collection, No. 12.)
Plate 4 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, detail of main entrance. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, J.H.G. Russell Collection, No. 12.)
Plate 5 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, front (east) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 6 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, rear (west) and south façades, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 7 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, rear (west) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 8 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, detail of rear (west) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

Plate 9 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, second floor display area with ornamental tin ceilings, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)
Plate 10 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, first floor entrance, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)
Plate 11 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, first floor retail space, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

Plate 12 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, second floor retail space with ornamental tin ceiling, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)
Plate 13 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, fourth floor workshop space, 2015. Exterior brick wall includes the arches of the front windows. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

Plate 14 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, fifth floor, 2015. The dumbwaiter, located behind the green door on the left is no longer operations but does include its original lifting mechanisms and machinery above. The slanted roof joists, used to move rain water, are also visible. (M. Peterson, 2015.)
Plate 15 – Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, third floor structural system with metal hardware and exposed subfloor. (M. Peterson, 2015.)
Plate 16 – Princess Street looking north from Notre Dame Avenue, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

Plate 17 – Princess Street looking south from McDermot Avenue, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 19 – David W. Bole, 1902. (Courtesy of Archives of Manitoba, Collective Personalities #2.)
Plate 20 – Painting of the founding of Goodwill Industries by Reverend J. Richmond Craig of Grace Methodist Church, showing Grace Church (left), the first warehouse on Sherbrook Street (middle) and a delivery truck at a house (right). (Courtesy of D.S. McKechnie, President and C.E.O. of Canadian Goodwill Industries Corporation.)