242 PRINCESS STREET

BATHGATE BLOCK

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

October 2004
Winnipeg in the early 1890s was, although few realized it, on the verge of a spectacular era of growth, development and maturity that would almost completely change it by World War I. But this comprehensive growth was far from random. Specific districts that had been established a decade earlier provided the basic pattern for this frenzied period of growth.

The real estate boom of the early 1880s was intimately connected to the early construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), Canada’s first transcontinental railway, west of Winnipeg. 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 and avenues. It was also the beginning of the segregation of the various sectors of the city – residential, commercial and industrial – and their specific buildings.¹ The huge advance in land prices was especially noticeable along Main Street north of Portage Avenue. Here the small residential properties were consolidated into larger blocks of land and replaced by increasingly massive business-related structures (Plate 1).

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. Companies like R.J. Whitla, Stobart, Eden and Company, George D. Wood and J.H. Ashdown were all organized and carrying on business prior to the CPR boom.² With this development came a maturation of the retail and wholesale sectors. The bust of 1882 did not end this development, but rather strengthened it by removing the excess and inexperienced entrepreneurs, by reducing the surplus stock and by hardening attitudes towards credit.³ The area, however, was undeniably developing as the warehouse district, slowly through the 1880s and 1890s and then rapidly after 1900.

³ R.R. Rostecki, op. cit., p. 113.
Nearing the end of the railway boom, a wealthy local merchant, William Bathgate, followed the lead of other investors and constructed a brick business block. He chose land in the northern extremities of the district and on a large corner lot completed a three-storey building in 1883 known as the Bathgate Block.

**STYLE**

The Bathgate Block is a good example of the Romanesque Revival style that became popular in warehouse districts throughout North America in the 1880s and was enthusiastically embraced in Winnipeg’s Exchange District.\(^4\)

The style is recognizable by its use of strong, rough textures, its massiveness, the flatness of the elevations, the rhythmic placement of windows, and the use of the rounded arch. Decorative patterning, including chevrons and corbels were also often used and in the more ornate structures, towers were popular.\(^5\) While it was used for the design of homes, commercial structures and even schools (for example, Wesley College [University of Winnipeg], 515 Portage Avenue, built 1896 – Plate 2), it came to be the style of choice in the warehouse district where its sturdy appearance portrayed stability and strength. Ornamentation was kept to a minimum, although earlier examples often featured ornate treatment at roof level.

In Winnipeg’s Exchange District, examples of Romanesque Revival warehouses are numerous although most extant examples date from the period after 1900.

**CONSTRUCTION**

As with its contemporaries, the Bathgate Block was built using mill construction methods. A heavy rubblestone foundation underlies the solid brick superstructure. A series of heavy square timber beams and posts provide support for the heavy wooden floors and brick exterior walls that

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rise three storeys above grade. Interior division into three sections was originally carried out via rubblestone walls in the basement supporting brick walls on the upper three floors. The building runs approximately 20.1 metres (66 feet) along Princess Street with 27.5 metres (90 feet) of frontage on Alexander Avenue. Total cost of construction was reported to be $35,000.

A large, three-storey brick and stone addition (8.2 x 20.4 metres – 27 x 67 feet) was made to the southwest corner of the warehouse in 1903. It was designed by James McDiarmid and built by W.J. Hodgins. A fourth storey was completed on this addition in 1910. This section stood until October 2000, when it was demolished (Plates 3 and 4).

A serious fire occurred on December 8, 1912, starting at the northwest corner and spreading to the third floor because the fire walls did not extend to the roof. The roof of the building collapsed under the weight of the firemen, who were only saved by the tin ceiling below them. Estimated damage to the building was $68,000.

**DESIGN**

The Bathgate Block, as originally designed, was much more ornate than what eventually was built (Plate 5). The ground floor was originally to have metal and glass display windows and ornate entrances to the retail space within. The doorways and show windows were simplified and reduced in the final building; all openings were embellished with arched heads (Plates 6 and 7).

For the roof, the architects originally planned a mansard roof surmounted by wrought-iron cresting. A simpler flat roof replaced these elements prior to construction and the brick buttresses of the mansard roof became a highly decorative parapet with corbelled brick accenting. The actual building, although somewhat reduced from the original, was still visually striking and quickly became a landmark in the area.

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6. City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 815350-12-2 (PC 50). Below as AR.
7. Winnipeg Daily Sun, October 20, 1883, p. 4.
The east (Princess Street) façade is divided into three vertical bays, separated by attached brick and stone pilasters running the entire height of the building. Each bay, in turn, holds three openings, windows on the upper two floors and a combination of windows and doors at street level. The ground floor of the southern-most bay originally featured two arched windows and a wooden door set in an arched frame. The windows, all of which were finished with rough-cut stone sills, included small, rectangular basement windows below. The middle bay held the same three openings; the doorway was placed in the centre of the bay. The door in the north bay was the farthest south of the three openings. The ground and second floors were separated by a belt course that continued the entire length of the south (Alexander Avenue) façade. The brick pilasters of the ground floor were ornamentally laid to mimic stone blocks, giving a quoin-like appearance to the structure’s southeast and northeast corners.

The upper two floors of the front elevation featured sets of three windows, all similarly arched and finished with lug sills and brick drip moulding. Above the third-storey windows, corbelled brick led to an ornate brick parapet with metal copping, highlighted by sunburst panels set in semi-circular arches. Ornate pilaster capitals and other detailing made the roof line one of the most unique in the city at the time.

The building’s four-bay south façade was a continuation of the architectural detailing of the front. The bay furthest west included a larger opening on the ground floor. It is unclear from published reports and period photographs whether or not this was a doorway, although this would seem appropriate.

The north and west (rear) façades were plain, with few windows and no ornamentation.

Alterations to the original exterior have been severe (Plates 8 to 10). The most obvious is at the top of the building, where the parapet has been reduced to a shadow of its former self – squared off and the metal cladding removed. The middle storeys have remained unaltered, although metal stairs have been attached to both the Princess Street and Alexander Avenue elevations.
Several alterations have also been completed on the ground floor of the two main façades. In 1975, the basement windows along Princess Street were filled in with glass blocks, the door in the central bay was closed in, a second door was built in the north bay and the glass panes of the arched windows were removed. On Alexander Avenue, all the openings on the ground floor were bricked in and a new door was built in the window opening furthest from Princess Street.

Taken in total, the alterations to the Bathgate Block have negatively affected its aesthetics. However, there remain numerous exterior elements that maintain its uniqueness within the warehouse district.

**INTERIOR**

The interior of the Bathgate Block is a mixture of original and altered layouts; some of the original finishes are still extant. The basement features exposed rubblestone foundation and interior walls, as well as both original wood and replacement steel posts. The front of the ground floor has been converted from its original three sections into one open space (Plate 11). At the rear, an office has been built in the southern section; the original layout appears to be intact in the northern portion of the building, as well as original wood flooring and some of the wooden beams.

The second floor features the original division and brick interior walls, as well as much of the original wooden flooring. Some of the wooden beams and posts have been replaced by steel elements (Plate 12). The third floor features some of the most original spaces in the building; the south and north sections include original wooden floors, ceiling, baseboards and window frames (Plate 13). The central portion, which includes the building’s one elevator, has been internally divided.

**INTEGRITY**

There are no major structural problems visible on the exterior of the Bathgate Block. It occupies its original location but, in its 120 years of existence, it has seen major alterations both outside
and in. See Appendix I for a list of City of Winnipeg Building Permits taken out for this structure.

STREETSCAPE
The Bathgate Block is located on the northwest corner of Princess Street and Alexander Avenue and is an important element of the streetscapes of both thoroughfares (Plates 14 and 15).

ARCHITECT
The Bathgate Block stands as a rare extant example of a structure designed by the influential architectural firm Barber and Barber. C.A. Barber came to Winnipeg from Ottawa in 1876 and joined with younger brother E.W. Barber in 1882 to become the province’s busiest designers over the next five years (see Appendix II for biographical information). They were responsible for important buildings throughout the province and their Winnipeg work included City Hall, the Leland Hotel and Knox Presbyterian Church (Plate 16). Barber and Barber have received 40 points from the Historical Buildings Committee.

PERSON/INSTITUTION
The original owner of the block was William Bathgate (Plate 17). Bathgate was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1832, emigrating to Janesville, Wisconsin with his family at the age of 20. In 1861, he moved to Montreal to pursue a career. Nine years later, he was farming in the Guelph Township of Ontario. In 1878, he moved to Winnipeg and started a retail furniture business under the name Bathgate and Gerrie. This firm lasted only a short time and in 1883 Bathgate was appointed managing director of the Manitoba Electric and Gas Light Company, holding this position until his retirement in 1897. He served one year, 1882, on City Council.⁹

Bathgate owned the block until 1888, when the Quebec-based financial firm of E.J. Price and T.H. Dunn took control of the property, possibly because of debt incurred by Bathgate during the railway boom.\textsuperscript{10} It was sold to Edwin Bromley, tent and canvas manufacturer, after the 1899 death of E.J. Price. Bromley was one of the block’s first long-term tenants; most of the earlier occupants had remained in the building for less than three years. Bromley’s company began as Hope and Bromley, establishing itself in the city in 1878. Their first business address was on McWilliam (Pacific) Street East and they employed approximately 50 men when they moved into the Bathgate Block in 1891. In 1904, Bromley and Company was incorporated as a joint stock firm, with Hague acting as manager.\textsuperscript{11} Remaining until 1926 (the company was renamed Bromley and Hague by 1910), the business was a fixture in the area.\textsuperscript{12} Other tenants to occupy space during this period were: C.H. Fields and Company, wholesale saddlers; E. and C. Gurney Company, stoves; Manitoba Electric Light and Gas Company; Mackenzie Brothers, wholesale hardware; Sadler and Haworth, belt manufacturers; Mills and Hicks, wholesale teas; Clare Brothers and Company, metal shingle and siding manufacturers, and George W. Griffiths and Company, commission agents. Beach Foundry began nearly 50 years of occupancy of the building in 1924, moving out in 1972-73 (the company owned the building in 1928-49),\textsuperscript{13} and J.H. O’Connor and Son, Limited, washing machines, occupied space from 1926 to ca.1950.\textsuperscript{14} The restaurant supply firm of Kelly Roberts began its occupation of 242-44 Princess Street in 1960, lasting over a decade, while H. Adelman Limited purchased the block in 1950 and owned it into the 1970s.\textsuperscript{15}

**EVENT**

There is no known significant event connected with this building.


\textsuperscript{11} Winnipeg Tribune, September 6, 1904, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{12} Aro, 1890-1930; and Winnipeg Daily Sun, December 29, 1882, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{13} Aro, 1925-50.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 1900-60; and Henderson’s Directory, 1900-1960.

\textsuperscript{15} Aro, 1950-80; and Henderson’s Directory, 1950-80.
CONTEXT
While this building stands today within Winnipeg’s large warehouse district, 120 years ago it would have been considered fairly isolated – north of City Hall and the small collection of nearby brick warehouses that by the mid-1880s represented the warehouse district and south of the Canadian Pacific Railway yards and its related factories and repair facilities. The Bathgate Block would have been built in the midst of the residential neighbourhood that had developed in the area. It would be nearly two decades before the lots around it would fill with large warehouses and factories. As such, the Bathgate Block can be described as an early commercial development for the area.

Appendix III lists nineteen pre-1890 buildings extant in the Exchange District and surrounding area (Portage Avenue to Higgins Avenue, Red River to Ellen Street). The buildings range from the oldest, the Duffin Block (Birt’s Saddlery) constructed in 1880 at 474 Main Street to the Galt Block, 103 Princess Street, the Miller, Morris Warehouse (86 Princess Street) and the Swiss Building (137 Bannatyne Avenue), all constructed in 1887. The Bathgate Block is one of six on this list to be completed in 1883 and stands as one of the more intact of these early Winnipeg structures.

LANDMARK
The Bathgate Block is located just outside the northern boundary of the City of Winnipeg’s nationally recognized Exchange District. Its corner location, its unique exterior paint scheme and its design all add to the building’s conspicuousness.
**APPENDIX I**

**CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report**

Assessment Record

Date: 27 October 2000

Prepared By:  M. Peterson

Building Address:  242 Princess Street

Building Name: Bathgate Block

242/44/46 Princess St. & 299 Alexander Ave.)

Original Use: warehouse

Current Use: warehouse/retail

Roll No. (Old):  815350 (12988)

RSN:  155565

Municipality:  12

Ward:  2

Property or Occupancy Code:  50

Legal Description: 9/11 St. John, Plan 32037, Lot 30

(Original: 11 W St. John, Plan 11, Lot 59 [except west 15’])

Location:  northwest corner of Alexander Avenue

Date of Construction:  1882

Storeys:  3

Heritage Status:  ON INVENTORY

Construction Type:  brick and stone foundation


- 518/1903 $1,500 (alterations); 1048/1903 $5,000 (3 storey addition, 27 x 67’); 2795/1910 $1,800 (additional storey for 1903 addition); 4461/1912 $4,800 (repairs after fire); 298/1913 $300 (repairs to #246); 2550/1923 $200 (metal roof on platform); 174/1926 $2,800 (alterations); 95/1939 $2,500 (repairs after fire); 579/1942 $5,000 (repairs to #246 after fire); 987/1946 [A] $2,500 (renew beams and posts at #246); 62/1947 [A] $10,000 (new elevator at #246); 8157/1949 [A] $400 (renew floors at #242-46); 431/1950 $2,500 (strengthen floors at #242-46); 2156/1950 [A] $2,000 (remodel office at #242); 5999/1975 [M727] $6,000 (alterations to store at #242); 7265/1975 [M734] $6,000 (alterations to store at #242)

**ARCHITECT: BARBER & BARBER**

**CONTRACTOR: UNKNOWN**
Barber and Barber

The firm was founded by Charles Arnold Barber (1848-1915) in Ottawa during 1870, but Barber dated his arrival in Winnipeg from May 1876. His earliest local commissions dated from 1877, when he designed two schools, the first of 106 designs throughout Manitoba until 1898. Of that number, 85 buildings were known to have actually been built. Barber took his first partner, James R. Bowes, in February 1881 and continued as Barber and Bowes until March 1882, when a younger brother, Earl W. Barber (1855-1915), replaced Bowes. During the next five years, the Barber and Barber firm became the largest and busiest architectural office in Winnipeg. A land boom had greatly enlarged Winnipeg, and such conditions gave rise to the flamboyant, extroverted buildings that were a specialty of this firm. Aggressive marketing as well as political connections helped fuel this firm, and its designs were used for such public buildings as the James Avenue Police Station (1883), the City Hall (1883-86) and the Emerson Town Hall (1881). The firm’s ecclesiastical works included St. John’s College Ladies School (1877), St. John’s College (1883) and Knox Presbyterian Church (1884). Barber and Barber were also responsible for business blocks such as the Gerrie (1881); the Robertson (1881); the Dundee (1882); the Bird Estate (1882; 1887); and the McIntyre (1898).

The Barbers designed only three known Winnipeg hotel buildings. The first was the Queen’s Hotel (1879) at Portage Avenue and Notre Dame Avenue. This was a three-storey white brick structure that was a luxury hotel until newer edifices were built in the early 1880s. A slow social descent began, which was temporarily halted by periodic renovations of the structure such as painting it red or eventually placing stucco over its out-of-date brickwork. Prohibition capped its career, and in 1915-16 it became an office building, the Montgomery Block. It was demolished for the Bank of Toronto (later Toronto-Dominion) in 1950. The Barber firm also designed the short-lived Grand Union Hotel at the northwest corner of Princess Street and Ross Avenue in

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1881. This three storey mansard-roofed hotel was destroyed by fire in 1894. The third hotel was the Leland House (Hotel) that was also destroyed by fire, in January 1999.

The Barbers’ buildings have had a low survival rate because they were located in areas that were being redeveloped by 1905. As a result, only four Barber and Barber buildings remain standing in Winnipeg. These are the Benson (Drake Hotel) and Bawlf blocks, 1882-83 of which only the façades remain (Plate 18), the Grain Exchange Building, 1892, only the front façade remains standing (Plate 19) and the Bathgate Block, 1883.

At one time, the work of the Barbers was so prolific in the city that these buildings gave Winnipeg its “look” until they were overshadowed by structures built in later eras. Early photographs of Winnipeg’s business district often feature at least one, and often two or three Barber buildings. Barber and Barber was Winnipeg’s first prestigious architectural firm whose reign lasted until about 1884 when the City Hall scandal began to erode their reputation. By 1887, their time in Winnipeg was over, and the firm moved to the United States. Between 1892 and 1898 when Charles Barber returned to Winnipeg, the firm designed a few buildings, but not in the numbers found in their previous sojourn. In Superior, Wisconsin, Earl Barber rebuilt the firm into a prestigious practice that survived his 1915 death. Conversely, brother Charles went to prison in 1903 for extortion with violence, thus capping an interesting career.

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2 E. Wells, *Winnipeg. Where the New West Begins* (Burlington: Windsor Publications (Canada) Ltd., 1982), pp. 160-161. Barber and Barber won a prize of $500 for designing Winnipeg’s second City Hall in 1883, estimating the total cost of construction at $80,000. This estimate was unrealistic and the contractor, Robert Dewar, later admitted to being forced to use inferior materials by the architects to complete the project under budget. Barber and Barber were replaced by designer James Chisholm and after more money was spent repairing and rebuilding much of the earlier work, the structure officially opened in November 1886 (nearly two years after its originally scheduled opening date).
APPENDIX III

PRE-1890 EXTANT COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES IN THE EXCHANGE DISTRICT AND REGION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR BUILT</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ARCHITECT</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Main Street, 474</td>
<td>Duffin Block (Birt’s Saddlery)</td>
<td>Parr, T.H.</td>
<td>Only fragment of original</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>McDermot Avenue, 175</td>
<td>Toronto Foundry Building</td>
<td>Ede, D.</td>
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<td>McDermot Avenue, 177</td>
<td>T.W. Taylor Building</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Intact</td>
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<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>McDermot Avenue, 246</td>
<td>Thomson-Codville Building (Sures Building)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Intact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Princess Street, 146</td>
<td>Benson Block (Drake Hotel)</td>
<td>Barber and Barber</td>
<td>Façade only</td>
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<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Princess Street, 154</td>
<td>Harris Building (Hochman’s Building)</td>
<td>Chisholm, J.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>McDermot Avenue, 221</td>
<td>Lyon Block (Bate Building)</td>
<td>Blackstone</td>
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<td>Princess Street, 72</td>
<td>Oddfellows Hall</td>
<td>McCowan, H.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Princess Street, 150</td>
<td>Bawlf Building (House of Comoy)</td>
<td>Barber and Barber</td>
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<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Princess Street, 242</td>
<td>Bathgate Block</td>
<td>Barber and Barber</td>
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<td>1883</td>
<td>King Street, 228</td>
<td>Coronation Block</td>
<td>Stewart, V.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Main Street, 492</td>
<td>Macdonald Shoe Store</td>
<td>Brown, J.</td>
<td>Only fragment of original</td>
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<td>Albert Street, 70</td>
<td>Telegram Building (Sures Block)</td>
<td>Hodgson, W.</td>
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<td>Princess Street, 104</td>
<td>Princess Street Warehouse</td>
<td>Brydon, W. &amp; Robertson, B.R.</td>
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<td>1885</td>
<td>William Avenue, 294</td>
<td>Massey Building</td>
<td>Browne, G.</td>
<td>Intact</td>
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<td>1886</td>
<td>McDermot Avenue, 173</td>
<td>Grange Building (Mitchell Block)</td>
<td>Timewall, A.T.</td>
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<td>1887</td>
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<td>Swiss Building (Bright &amp; Johnston Building)</td>
<td>Wilmot and Stewart</td>
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<td>Miller, Morris Warehouse</td>
<td>Browne, G.</td>
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<td>Princess Street, 103</td>
<td>Galt Block</td>
<td>Wheeler, C.H.</td>
<td>Intact</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1 Compiled from The Exchange District. Part 1: A Property Survey (Winnipeg: City of Winnipeg, 2001); and Historical Buildings Committee files.
Plate 1 – Looking west on McDermot Avenue from Main Street. The top photograph was taken in 1881, the bottom in 1902, showing the enormous development in two decades. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)
Plate 2 – Wesley College (University of Winnipeg), 515 Portage Avenue, 1900. Designed by George Browne and S.F. Peters, it stands as one of the best examples of Romanesque Revival architecture in Winnipeg. (M. Peterson Collection.)
Plate 3 – Rear addition of the Bathgate Block, prior to demolition. (M. Peterson, 2000.)

Plate 4 – Demolition of the rear addition of the Bathgate Block, October 2000. (M. Peterson, 2000.)
Plate 5 – Original architects’ drawing for the Bathgate Block, 242 Princess Street, 1882.
(Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg - Views - Album 3.)
Plate 6 – An early advertisement for Bromley and Company, showing the Bathgate Block as it was built in 1882, no date. (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N910.)
Plate 7 – Bathgate Block as it was constructed, ca.1903 (prior to the rear [west] addition). (M. Peterson Collection.)
Plate 8 – Bathgate Block, front (east) and south façades, 2002. (M. Peterson, 2002.)

Plate 9 – Detail of the roof, 2002. (M. Peterson, 2002.)
Plate 10 – South façade, 2002. (M. Peterson, 2002.)

Plate 12 – Second floor posts, original wooden elements in foreground, steel replacement posts to rear (east end), 2004. (M. Peterson, 2004.)
Plate 14 – Looking south along Princess Street, 2002. Bathgate Block at arrow. (M. Peterson, 2002.)

Plate 15 – Looking north along Princess Street, 2002. (M. Peterson, 2002.)
Plate 16 – Now-demolished structures designed by Barber and Barber: #1- Leland Hotel, 218 William Avenue (built in 1884); #2- James Avenue Police Station, 223 James Avenue (1883); #3- St. John’s College, Main Street (1883); #4- Knox Presbyterian Church (1884); and #5- McIntyre Block, 416 Main Street (1898).
Plate 18 - Benson and Bawlf Block, 144-48 Princess Street, 1882-83. These twin façades were actually part of one building and were representative of the Barbers’ commercial architecture during the Winnipeg boom. The Benson Block (left) became the Drake Hotel. (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg - Streets - Princess - 13.)
Plate 19 - Grain Exchange (Bawlf Block #2), 164-66 Princess Street, 1892. (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Buildings - Business - Grain Exchange, Princess.)