

146 PRINCESS STREET – DRAKE HOTEL (BENSON BLOCK)
Barber & Barber, 1882



This hotel was one of two identical buildings.

Originally called the Benson Block, this building was twin to the Bawlf Block at 148 Princess, both of which were constructed as a speculative venture in the boom of 1882. Joseph Benson had owned a livery stable on the site, and he pooled his capital with Nicholas Bawlf to finance the construction. First occupied by the wholesale grocery firm of Griffin and Douglas, the Benson Block exhibited immediate shortcomings when the interior basement foundations threatened to collapse under the weight of goods stored above. While faulty construction is not confined to such periods of hysterical growth, in this instance it is illustrative of the material shortage, hurried work and the lack of skilled craftsman that attended the 1881-82 boom.

The Benson Block had a varied career as its function changed with spatial demands of the area:

1883-85	Griffin and Douglas – wholesale grocery
1886-94	John Elliot and sons – agricultural implements Buckle Printing Company and others
1894-1904	Globe Hotel
1904-17	Market Hotel
1917-18	Holt Block
1918-25	Warehouse
1925-37	Market Hotel
1937-44	Bank Hotel
1944-74	Drake Hotel