

**150 PRINCESS STREET – BAWLF BLOCK (HOUSE OF COMOY)**  
*Barber & Barber, 1882*



The block was designed by Barber and Barber, Winnipeg's foremost boom-time architects who also built the old City Hall, the Leland Hotel, the McIntyre Block and Manitoba College. Their impact on the burgeoning city, and the prominence of the Drake Hotel in this 1880 streetscape, combine to make this building significant in Winnipeg's history.

Twin to the Drake Hotel at 146 Princess, the Bawlf Block was constructed during the heyday of the Winnipeg boom in 1882. The two structures were a joint speculative venture, with Nicholas Bawlf providing the impetus, and probably the lion's share of the financing of both structures. Bawlf was an Irish immigrant who settled in Ontario before coming west in 1877, where he made a name in the agricultural feed supply business. This business expanded into the wheat trade and he later extended his commercial prominence into political influence at the municipal and provincial levels.

Bawlf employed architects Barber and Barber to design his block. These were essentially boom-time architects whose flamboyant designs were found in the old City Hall, Manitoba College, and the James Avenue Police Station among others. The Bawlf Block façade is virtually unaltered from its 1882 appearance.

Built as an office, the earliest tenants in the Bawlf Block were James O'Brien and Co., a clothing manufacturer. From 1889 to 1913, the Dominion Bank and Trees, Spriggs and Company, a harness firm, shared the block with several smaller businesses. From 1915 to 1962, the Holden Company, distributor of electrical tools was the principal tenant along with the House of Comoy.