

200 PRINCESS STREET – TORONTO HIDE & WOOL COMPANY BUILDING
George Browne, 1893



This modest little brick and stone warehouse has been a part of Winnipeg's warehouse district since its construction in 1893, located on the south side of Ross Avenue just west of one of the area's main thoroughfares, Princess Street (it was referred to for many years as 298 Ross Avenue).

The building measures 10.1 x 27.3 x 7.9 metres and features solid brick walls resting on a stone foundation. It has been added to twice, in 1947 the east side portion was built (brick and hollow tile and reinforced concrete) and in 1994, the concrete block addition to the west was completed.

The original one-storey cream coloured brick building features a heavy rusticated base at grade leading to the superstructure above. Three bands of rusticate stone divide the façade horizontally. The lower band is interrupted by window and door openings, the middle band

forms continuous heads above these openings and the top band accents the roofline. Four brick pilasters divide the façade vertically and rise above the roofline, finished with pyramidal shaped stone caps. Brick laid in a patchwork pattern accents the areas above the window and door openings. The rear (south) brick wall is also exposed and plain, openings have been closed with brick or concrete block.

The 1947 addition is unadorned except for a band of brick above the window openings and another at the roofline. The northeast corner is angled and holds the entrance. There is a large display window in the east wall and a smaller opening on the north. Sometime after 1978, two large loading doors were bricked in on the west end of the north façade. A large addition, measuring 10.4 x 33.8 metres, was completed on the west side of the original building in 1994.

The original interior featured an office in the front (north) end of the building, with loading/unloading space to the rear. The basement was designed with sloping concrete floors to facilitate the storage and handling of raw hides and furs. At present, the only original area of the 1893 section is the wood beam/posts in the basement, while the upper floor has been subdivided.

The architect of this building was George C. Browne (1852-1919). Browne was born in Montreal, the son of a renowned architect and came to Winnipeg 1882 to set up his private practice. As one of the City's early influential architects, Brown designed many of its early substantial buildings including: Massey Building, 294 William Avenue, 1885, Grade II; Miller, Morse and Co. Warehouse, 86 Princess Street, 1887, Grade III; Mackenzie and Powis Warehouse, 78 Princess Street, 1891, Grade III; Wesley College (University of Winnipeg), with S.F. Peters, 1895; Young Men's Christian Association Building (Birk's Building), 276 Portage Avenue, 1900, Grade II; and Gault Building, 92-104 Arthur Street, 1900, Grade II.

The 1947 addition was designed by local architect H. Lloyd Finch (1904-1967) and built by Smith and Fredborg. Finch graduated from the University of Manitoba's School of Architecture in 1926 and after working in Chicago, Illinois for six years, started a practice in Winnipeg that lasted until his death in 1967. Finch's work after World War II concentrated heavily on the design of innovative residential structures and neighbourhood development, for example, the Grant Park

Plaza neighbourhood developed in the mid-1950s. He designed a number of hotels in the early 1960s including the Niakwa Hotel, St. Anne's Road, 1960, the Carlton Inn, 220 Carlton Street, 1960-1961 (demolished), the Kildonan Motor Hotel, 2100 Main Street, 1961, the Charleswood Motor Hotel, 3425 Roblin Boulevard, 1962, the Windsorian Motor Hotel, 1034 Elizabeth Road, 1963 and the Balmoral Motor Hotel, 621 Balmoral Street, 1965.

The original owner/tenant of the building was the Toronto Hide and Wool Company, founded in 1866 in Ontario. It opened a Winnipeg branch on Princess Street in 1887 which saw immediate and consistent growth over the next several decades. It was estimated in 1893 that 60% of the total wool shipped east from Western Canada was shipped by this company.

The branch was operated by Harry A. Leadley, who would ultimately operate his own fur business, H. & A. Leadley, out of this warehouse. During the post-World War I era, tenants of the property included Kerr Albert Company, hides, wools and furs, the Port Nelson Fish Company and Jansen Brothers, wholesale market gardeners. Cosman's Furniture took ownership of the property in the 1970s and used the building as part of their retail operations.

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

Exterior-

- One-storey brick and stone building with flat roof located on the south side of Ross Avenue, its main façade facing north onto Ross Avenue, its east and west façades hidden by additions and its south façade facing the back lane; and
- The front (north) façade with its rusticated stone base, common clay brick walls, large windows and door in rectilinear openings, rusticated stone belt courses, brick patchwork patterning above openings, brick pilasters finished with pyramidal shaped stone caps above the flat, stone capped roofline.

Interior-

- None.