



**36 ROSLYN ROAD - J.C. FALLS HOUSE**

City of Winnipeg  
Historical Buildings Committee

January 1994

## **36 ROSLYN ROAD - J.C. FALLS HOUSE**

By the early 1900s, Winnipeg had embarked on the most sustained period of growth to that point in its history. The physical effects were felt throughout and beyond the built-up area. Infill construction and redevelopment occurred in established districts, while new residential, commercial and industrial precincts constantly redefined the city's periphery. Most growth followed spatial patterns set before the turn of the century, including increased density and specialization of land use in the central core and the outward extension of mainly residential districts along the Red and Assiniboine rivers to the north, south and west.

One area that saw tremendous growth before and after 1900 was Fort Rouge. What had been a scattered settlement of French-speaking families in the 1870s became Ward One in the City of Winnipeg in 1882. Properties close to the Assiniboine River attracted wealthy businessmen and public figures who liked the area's proximity to the downtown combined with its quasi-rural character. Numerous mansions, situated on extensive, well-manicured grounds, were built during this period. After 1900, less exclusive housing districts also were developed.

In those early years, Roslyn Road was one of the most prestigious addresses in Fort Rouge and all of Winnipeg. In 1907, in the midst of the pre-World War I growth phase, John C. Falls built a large solid brick home at 36 Roslyn Road.

### **STYLE**

The Falls House has many of the characteristics of the Queen Anne Revival style. The style borrowed heavily from English architecture of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, blending classical and medieval motifs into a picturesque form. Asymmetry was achieved through any number of combinations of porches, bay windows, projecting wings, balconies and other devices. Roofs were usually irregular and complex, with dormers, gables and ornamental chimneys. Variations in materials and colours were also used to animate the façades. Given this freedom of design, however, accomplished

designers were still able to create balance in the structures, offsetting busy surfaces by placing calmer elements nearby.<sup>1</sup>

The popularity of the style in Canada began in the 1880s and lasted until World War I. On the prairies, pre-1900 examples of the style were not as numerous because large-scale development occurred after the turn of the century. Post-1900, it was quickly adopted for use in the growing residential districts, especially the more affluent neighbourhoods where its showy qualities were greatly admired.

## CONSTRUCTION

This house is located on land legally described as 41 St. Boniface, Plan 27423, Lot 15.<sup>2</sup> The 22-storey structure measures approximately 13.73 x 14.34 x 12.20 m. (45 x 47 x 40') and rests on a stone foundation 45.72 cm. (18") thick (see Appendix I). The solid brick walls of the superstructure are 33.02 cm. (13") thick on all levels. Ceiling heights are 2.29 m. (7'6") in the basement, and 2.97 m. (9'9"), 2.82 m. (9'3") and 2.59 m. (8'6") on the first, second and top floors respectively. During construction, 19 cords of stone and 100,000 bricks were used. Total cost of construction was \$15,000.<sup>3</sup> In 1985, extensive interior renovations totalling \$50,000 were completed to convert the building into offices.<sup>4</sup>

## DESIGN

This red brick house, situated at the southwest corner of Roslyn Road and Bryce Street, is a well designed, aesthetically pleasing structure. The front or north façade features a centrally located

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<sup>1</sup> L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Records, Roll No. 324840, Ward 1, PC 40. Below as AR. The original legal description was 41 St. Boniface, Plan 314, Block 6/8, part of Lot 31 and all of Lot 32.

<sup>3</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #1259/1907.

<sup>4</sup> BP #4113/1985.

entrance porch, flanked on either side by two-storey bay windows. A parapet cornice with abstracted pediments finishes these bay windows. Elsewhere, arched windows with cement lug sills and brick heads grace this elevation. The Bryce Street (east) façade features a large, two-storey veranda, with a door leading from the second-floor deck into the house. Arched and rectangular windows are both present; all have brick heads and cement lug sills.

An exterior wooden staircase has been added at the rear of the structure, as well as to the veranda/deck on the east façade. Windows on the rear or south façade are rectangular with brick heads; many also are accented with cement lug sills. The west side is plain with arched windows and cement lug sills. The building's hipped roof is interrupted on the north, south and east slopes by shed dormers.

This house is a fine example of early 20th century residential architecture, its handsome superstructure covering a spacious interior.

## **INTERIOR**

This structure has been readapted as an alternative medicine centre renamed the Guvana Therapy Centre. Tenants include chiropractors; massage therapists, psychologists, dentists and a main-floor health food store. Alterations to the interior elements have been sensitively carried out by the property manager and many have been retained. The basement and foundation system has been stabilized by the use of two, 12.20 m. (40') steel beams resting on specially designed teleposts. On the ground floor, the three fireplaces have been retained and the wooden staircase and floors refinished. The openness of the original layout has been replaced by a number of small offices. New walls, fluorescent lighting, acoustic tile ceilings and upgraded fire alarm equipment are also part of the renovations.

The general layout of the second floor is not being substantially altered. Most of the 12 small rooms created when the home was converted into a boarding house in the 1930s are to remain. These

renovations were done haphazardly, destroying the ornate wooden window frames in many of the rooms. Present renovations to the heating, lighting and ceiling systems, when completed, will bring these frames back to their original splendour. The third floor, similar to the second floor, will see general repairs and upgrading rather than large-scale alterations.

### **INTEGRITY**

The former Falls House sits on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. City of Winnipeg Building Permits listed against the address do not appear to pertain to exterior elements. The exceptions are the wooden staircases built at the rear and east sides of the house in 1951.

### **STREETSCAPE**

Roslyn Road has been much altered since the turn of the century. Gone are most of the grand mansions that dotted the avenue. They have been replaced, in most part, by apartment blocks, both older three-storey brick buildings and newer high-rise types. The latter have had a negative effect on the area's historical character. However, some older homes are still in the neighbourhood, and the former Falls House is a good example of the type of home built in this area.

### **ARCHITECT**

The local firm Wardell and Nichols was responsible for the design of this structure. L.A. Wardell (1879-1962) and D.W.F. Nichols (1881-1951) both learned their trade in southern Ontario before coming to Winnipeg. Their partnership was short-lived and their list of designs is modest (see Appendix II for biographical sketches). This is the first Wardell and Nichols building to be graded by the Historical Buildings Committee.

The contractor listed on the City of Winnipeg Building Permit is A.B. Anderson, a local builder.

## PERSON

The original owner of 36 Roslyn Road was John Claire Falls, the long-time vice-president and general manager of the Wood-Vallance Company, wholesale hardware and metal merchants, with offices at 256 McDermot Avenue.<sup>5</sup> Born at Kells, County Meath, Ireland in 1861, Falls emigrated to Canada and the Kitchener, Ontario area at an early age. After receiving his education in Kitchener, he worked at a local hardware store. He came to Winnipeg in 1892 and took up a position as manager and buyer for the George D. Wood and Company hardware business (later renamed Wood-Vallance). Over the next 32 years, Falls rose to the post of vice-president, the position he held when he died suddenly at his Roslyn Road home on April 11, 1924. He left a widow and one daughter.<sup>6</sup>

The Falls family continued to own the house until its sale in 1943. During that period, a number of tenants occupied the premises, the most notable of whom was Albert Edward Warren. Warren lived in the house for only two years, 1925 and 1926. Born in England in 1874, he first came west in 1902 with the Canadian Northern Railway. In 1918, he was appointed chief operating officer of the federal Department of Railways and Canals in Ottawa. It was in this capacity that he came to Winnipeg in late 1918 as general manager of the western lines of the newly formed Canadian National Railways. He remained in Winnipeg until late 1926 when he moved to Toronto as general manager of the central region. By 1930, he was back in Winnipeg as the vice-president of the western lines, a position he held until his death on October 16, 1939.<sup>7</sup>

Other tenants during the Falls family tenure were Herbert P. Pennock of H.P. Pennock and Company, wholesale commission brokers, Joseph A. Aubert, assistant manager of the Foster Grain Company and William V. Jones, accountant with Princess Messenger.<sup>8</sup> Pennock moved into this house from 6 Roslyn Road, a duplex that would later be converted and renamed the Lilly

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<sup>5</sup> Henderson's Directory (Winnipeg), 1910-25.

<sup>6</sup> Manitoba Free Press, April 12, 1924, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Winnipeg Free Press, October 17, 1939, pp. 1, 4.

<sup>8</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll, Roll No. 324840, Ward 1. Below as ARo.

Apartments.<sup>9</sup> The first owner and three subsequent tenants of the house illustrate the type of residents occupying this neighbourhood. All were high-ranking executives in medium or large businesses.

By the late 1930s, the holding appears to have been converted into a boarding house, a reflection of the area's decline as a popular district for the city's elite. The number of tenants occupying the home in the 1940s ranged from 14 to 21. The next owner of the house was Mary J. Blois, widow of H.E. Blois. She did not reside at the address, but rather continued to operate it as a boarding house.<sup>10</sup>

From approximately 1951 to 1974, the property was owned by Mrs. Marie E. Martin, matron of the St. Michael's Nursing Home, located on the premises.<sup>11</sup> In 1966, a total of 30 patients were housed at the address.<sup>12</sup> In 1985, the entire interior was renovated and the house was converted into office space for Locations Realty.

## EVENT

There is no known significant event connected with this structure.

## CONTEXT

The former Falls House is illustrative of historical patterns for both the neighbourhood and the city as a whole. Fort Rouge, originally known as St. Boniface West, was initially populated by French-speaking fur traders and their families, who took up residence on the long strips of land fronting the rivers. As the Red River Settlement matured and grew, many of the river lot inhabitants moved further afield.

Located close to the growing City of Winnipeg, the land south of the Assiniboine River was ideal for

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<sup>9</sup> The Year Past, 1983 (Winnipeg: Historical Buildings Committee, 1984), p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Henderson's Directory (Winnipeg), 1960-80; and ARo.

<sup>12</sup> AR.

those wanting to be close to the city and yet removed from it. Early residents included Gilbert McMicken, Assistant Receiver General; Alexander McMicken, Winnipeg's mayor in 1883; Sir Augustus M. Nanton, financier and first president of the Winnipeg Stock Exchange; R.A. Ruttan, Dominion Lands Agent; and F.L. Patton, Union Bank manager.<sup>13</sup> The fact that two bridges connected Fort Rouge with Winnipeg by 1881 (Plate 1) reflects both the influence of the Fort Rouge residents and the district's potential to develop quickly.

In 1907, the Falls House took its place among the opulent homes and lush grounds, in what had been one of the most desirable Winnipeg residential addresses in the late 19th century - Roslyn Road. Its scale and degree of ornamentation were necessary to fit into the architectural language of the surrounding homes and apartment blocks.

It is also illustrative of the growth of Winnipeg's suburban network. This development was necessitated by the growth of the commercial, financial, institutional and wholesale concerns that became synonymous with the downtown district. The rapidly expanding centre replaced the older residential property and new residential neighbourhoods began developing at the extremities of the downtown region.

## **LANDMARK**

This structure is located at the intersection of two modestly used streets. The building, now surrounded by high-rise apartment blocks, is not conspicuous, although its new public role will increase this conspicuousness in time.

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<sup>13</sup> Joyce Solonecki, editor, Fort Rouge Through the Years (Winnipeg: Fort Rouge Centennial Brochure Committee, 1974), p. 4; and Henderson's Directory (Winnipeg), 1880-1900.



APPENDIX I -

Address- 36 Roslyn Road  
Name- Locations Realty Office (former Falls House)  
Type- offices

Roll Number (Old)- 324840 (7389) District- 1 PC- 40

Legal Description- 41 St. Boniface, Plan 27423, Lot 15\*

Physical Description- southwest corner Bryce Street

Year Built- 1907 Storeys- 2½ + B

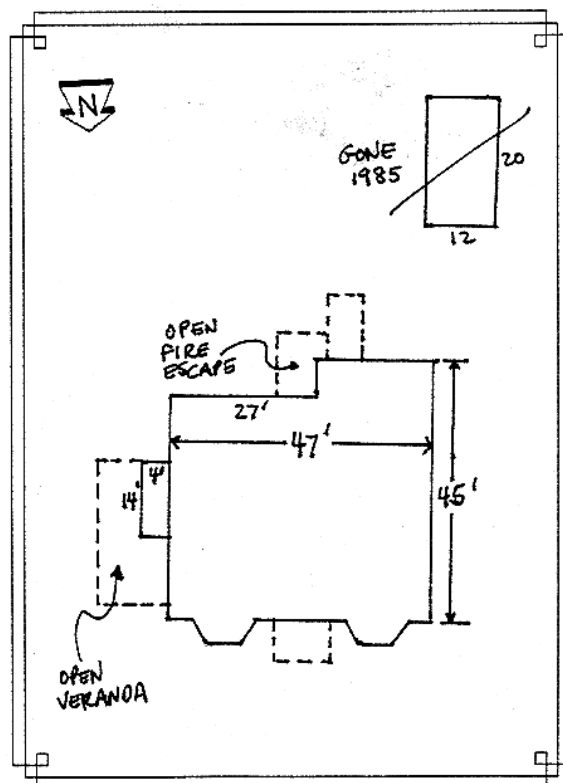
Construction- red face brick and stone foundation

Building Permits ["(P)" indicates plans are available]-

- 1259/1907 \$15,000 (original) (attached); 2492/1936 \$100; 4353/1950 \$1,500 (repairs); 6847/1951 \$500 (fire escape); 3005/1954 \$100 (fuel tank); 845/1965 \$200 (alteration); 4113/1985 \$50,000 (conversion to offices)

Information-

- \* original legal description was 41 St. Boniface, Plan 314, Block 618, Part of Lot 31: Lot 32
- ceilings: B- 7'
  - 1st- 9½'
  - 2nd- 8½'
  - 3rd- 6 to 8'
- in 1966 was St. Michael's Nursing Home (30 patients)
- in 1977 was a boarding house with 16 boarders
- 1985 renovations to convert to offices (occupied as of July 1985)



## APPENDIX II -

### WARDELL AND NICHOLS<sup>1</sup>

L.A. Wardell and D.W.F. Nichols were responsible for a number of interesting designs throughout the city during their short-term partnership.

Lindsay Alexander Wardell was born in Dundas, Ontario on March 13, 1879. At the age of 21, he was working in Hamilton, Ontario as a draftsman for architect W.P. Witton. By 1903, he was a draftsman in the Toronto offices of the prestigious firm Sproatt and Rolph.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, Wardell was sent to Winnipeg to represent that firm. The first reference to Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell is found on City of Winnipeg Building Permit #597/1905. Wardell stayed with Sproatt and Rolph for the 1905 and 1906 construction seasons, then in 1907 formed a new partnership with another transplanted Torontonian, David William Fair Nichols. No subsequent Sproatt and Rolph designs were recorded in the city between 1907 and 1919.<sup>3</sup>

Nichols was born in Leeds, England on February 28, 1881. After emigrating to Canada, he served for five years (1897-1902) as an apprentice with the architectural firm, Burke and Horwood of Toronto. From 1906 until 1907, he worked in Winnipeg as a drafts-man for J.H.G. Russell and John D. Atchison, two well-known architects.

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<sup>1</sup> Biographical information supplied by Robert G. Hill, editor, The Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Encyclopedia, Second Edition, Volume 3 (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1988), p. 2064. Henry Sproatt (1866-1934) and Ernest Ross Rolph (1871-1958) established a partnership in 1899. Sproatt, an authority in Gothic architecture, had worked with Frank Darling earlier in the decade. The firm designed a number of important buildings across Canada. The City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP) issued on June 3, 1904 (#771/1904) is the first to name Sproatt, Rolph and partner James M. Chrysler design architects. Henderson's Directory (Winnipeg) lists Sproatt, Rolph and Chrysler as maintaining an office at #8-499 Main Street (Thomson Block) in 1905, although none are listed as living in the city. By 1906, the listing is for Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell.

<sup>3</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books (below as Ledgers), 1900-1919.

The Wardell – Nichols partnership only lasted until mid-1909.<sup>4</sup> Wardell remained in the city until ca.1911 and his whereabouts are unknown until he is listed as an architect in Hamilton in 1915. From the next three years he worked alone, then becoming a partner in Scott and Wardell. In 1924, he moved to Toronto where he continued his architectural work into the 1950s.

Nichols remained in Winnipeg, working alone between 1909 and 1915, except for two buildings designed in 1910 with Norman M. Moffatt (1873-1970)<sup>5</sup> under the name Nichols and Moffatt, and one in 1913 with J. Pender West (Nichols and West).<sup>6</sup> The last City of Winnipeg Building Permit with D.W.F. Nichols listed as architect is dated September 20, 1915 (#1075/1915). By 1917, Nichols had relocated to Windsor, Ontario where he stayed for the remainder of his career. He died on November 1, 1951 in Windsor.<sup>7</sup> Wardell died in Toronto on January 13, 1962.<sup>8</sup>

A study of City of Winnipeg Building Permits from 1900 to 1919 identified the following buildings under the name of one or both men, as well as the Sproatt and Rolph designs that Wardell would have overseen or drawn:

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<sup>4</sup> Ledgers, 1908-1910. The last permit to list Wardell and Nichols as architects is dated June 9, 1909 (#1013/1909), and eight days later a permit listing Nichols as architect was issued (#1133/1909). Wardell does not appear again in a permit up to 1919.

<sup>5</sup> National Archives of Canada, Historical Resources Branch. Norman McNabb Moffatt became the prairie architect for the Union Bank of Canada in 1919, holding the same position when it was merged with the Royal Bank of Canada in 1925. He remained with the company until 1933.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1909-1919. A second structure designed by Nichols and West in 1913 was cancelled.

<sup>7</sup> Windsor Star, November 2, 1951, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> The Telegram (Toronto), January 15, 1962, p. 9.

Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell:

1905-

Alexander Avenue, corner Isabel Street - store/apartments for D. McGregor (Permit #2664)

Kennedy Street, corner Cumberland Avenue - apartment block (#948)

Main Street - addition to Colin H. Campbell store (#597)

Roslyn Road - stable for R.A. Rogers (#2193)

St. John's Avenue - E.B. Nash House (#2234)

1906-

Wellington Crescent, #424 - E.F. Hutchings House (#430)

William Avenue - 2 houses for J. Thompson (#1807)

Wardell and Nichols:

1907-

Furby Street - addition of gymnasium to Dr. H.P.H. Galloway House (#1951)

Roslyn Road, #36 - J.C. Falls House (#1259)

Roslyn Road - stable for Colin H. Campbell (#1346)

1908-

Ethel Avenue (now Kingsway) - Miss Stafford House (#620)

Home Street - duplex for Ross and Redmond (#753)

Martha Street, #45/47 - alteration to house (#217)

Notre Dame Avenue - Stevens and Sons warehouse (#752)

Portage Avenue - Ontario, Manitoba and Western Land Company Building (#226)

1909-

Central Avenue (now Middle Gate) - E.F. Lang House (#1013)

Furby Street - H.M. Tucker House (#772)

Portage Avenue - addition to the Ontario, Manitoba and Western Land Co. Building (#357)

D.W.E. Nichols:

1909-

Rosser Avenue (now Warsaw Avenue) - L.D. Beard House (#1133)

1910-

Furby Street - B. Skipwith House (#1438, with N.M. Moffatt)

Wolseley Avenue - clubhouse for Assiniboine Bowling Club (#1920, with N.M. Moffatt)

D.W.F. Nichols (continued):

1911-

Assiniboine Avenue (now West Gate) - D.M. Hackney House (#573)  
Marrion Avenue (now Walker Avenue) - H. McDonald House (#1296)  
Pritchard Avenue - J. Schaeffer House (#939)  
Strathcona Street - store for A. Scolena (#2896)  
Wolseley Avenue - J.T. Haig House (#775)

1912-

Arlington Street - Northland Knitting Company factory (#3401)  
Polson Avenue - 2 houses for J. Cathcart (#3016)  
St. John's Avenue, #9 - alteration to house (#1369)  
Ethelbert Street, #160 - St. Margaret's Anglican Church (#2043)  
York Avenue - alteration to Auditorium Rink (#3913)

1913-

Burrows Avenue - apartment for K. Stappler (#2374, with J.P. West)

1914-

Cornish Avenue - City of Winnipeg "Public Baths" (#2789)

1915-

Rathgar Avenue - St. Alban's Church (#1075)

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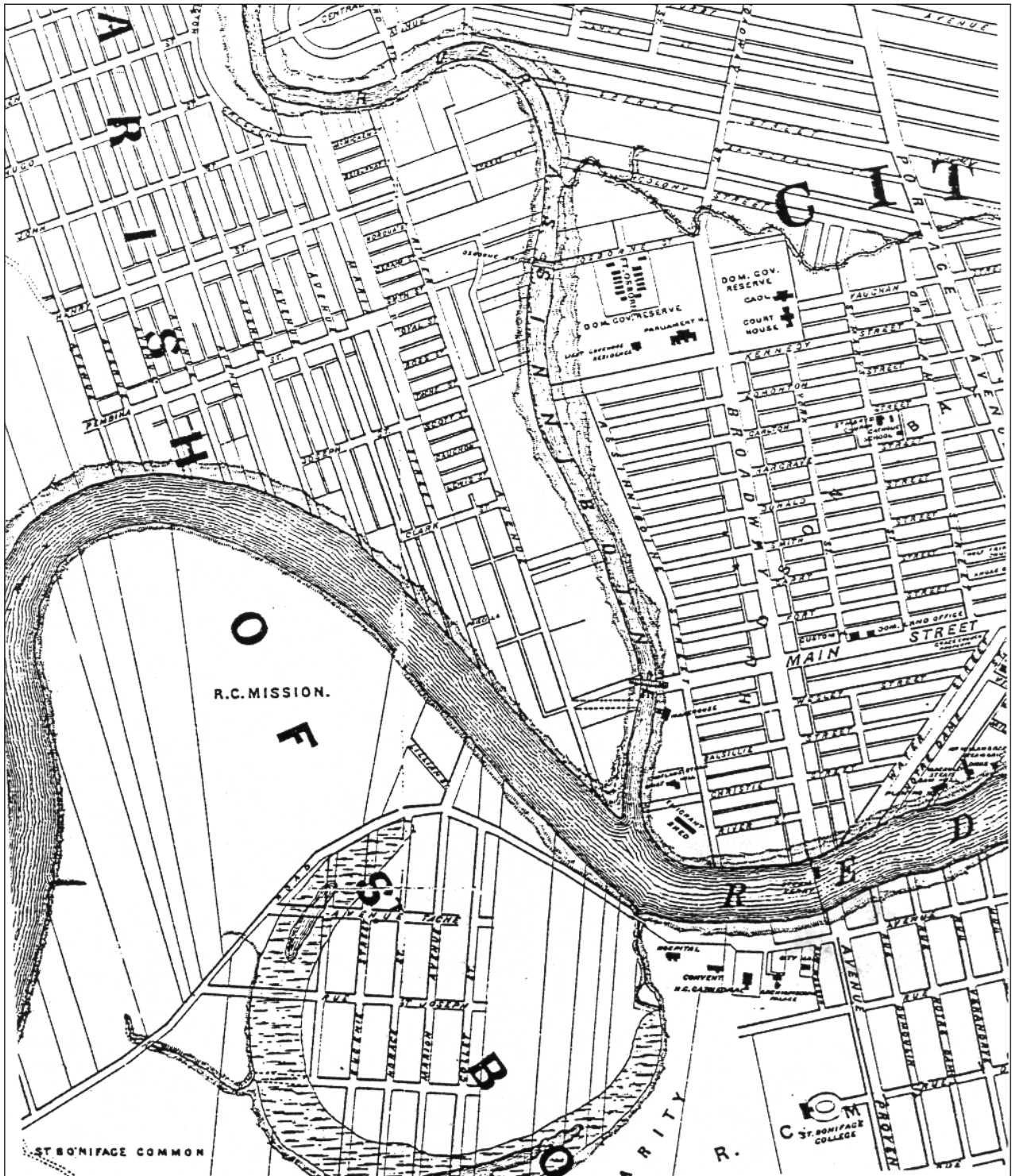


Plate 1 Map of part of the City of Winnipeg and surrounding region, 1881. Note that there are already two bridges connecting the City of Winnipeg with present-day Fort Rouge. (Reproduced from Joyce Solonecki, editor, *Fort Rouge Through the Years* [Winnipeg: Fort Rouge Centennial Brochure Committee, 1974], p. 6.)