

Memory Lane

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The Chicken Roost (Cheapies Building)

For many Hamiltonians 67 King Street East, before its recent history as Cheapies Records and Tapes, was the well-known Chicken Roost. This barn-themed restaurant opened in 1948 and closed in 1986. The Chicken Roost became an iconic restaurant in the history of Hamilton, with its signature chicken on a bun with barbecue sauce, chicken soup, lobster salad, pies and, most notably, ice cream puffs and fudge sauce. The restaurant became a place to rendezvous for dating teens, tired shoppers and grandmothers and their grandchildren. Meeting at the Chicken Root was a tradition.

The Chicken Roost Restaurant was founded by Mintz brothers Max and Benny. Max Mintz had to sell his suit October 1, 1948, opening day, to have money in the cash register. Mintz had worked in a restaurant that specialized in chicken in Toronto. One day while passing through Hamilton with his brother they went looking for a place to eat downtown but could only find the Majestic Grill across from the old city hall on James Street North. Mintz saw an opportunity to open a restaurant and he was right, there was a line up opening day and at the height of its popularity Chicken Roost employed 56 people. Max Mintz continued in the food service industry by founding Maxwell Dining Limited and, in 2012, operated Lo Presti's at Maxwell's at 165 Jackson Street East. Max Mintz passed away in 2018.



Owner Max Mintz reminisces with former Chicken Roost employees.

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The Chicken Roost ...continued



Waitress Beverly Woods gives the waiting queue a sample of 1948 prices in this 1981 photo. Ron Pozzer, Hamilton Spectator.



The Chicken Roost in the background of Remembrance Day celebrations, 1961. Wilson Watches was located next door at the time.

67 to 71 King Street East are three units part of a six-unit commercial row known as Stinson's Block spanning from 67 to 79 King Street East that was constructed circa 1837. The commercial row was owned by prominent merchant and businessman Ebenezer Stinson, for which Stinson Street is named, and subsequently by John and Thomas Stinson. 67 and 69 King Street East have housed a variety of businesses including shoe maker J. Wills (1859-1871), Webber & Winslow hardware (1870-1886), Crystal Café (1909-1929), Connon Floral Company (1910-1929), Honey Dew Restaurant (1930-1940), and eventually the Chicken Roost Restaurant (1948-1980s).

71 King Street East has housed a variety of businesses including a series of shoe merchants in the late-19th century, the Heintzman Company piano store (1901-1912), and Andrew Brothers Jewellers (1959-1980s). Up until 2020, the ground floor of 67 and 69 King Street East housed Cheapies Record Store, which first moved into the building in the 1990s, and 71 King Street East houses Widemart Shoes.



Here are some of the businesses included in the Stinson block between Hughson and John Streets including the popular Honey Dew restaurant that was located here before The Chicken Roost. Honey Dew was known for their orange drink and honey glazed doughnut. Photograph found in Gary Evan's book The Prints of King.