

Memory Lane

EXPLORE THE PAST OF DOWNTOWN HAMILTON

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11-15 King St. East (Mills Building)

11 King Street East is a five-storey brick building constructed in 1903 as part of a three-unit commercial row consisting of 11 to 15 King Street East designed by architect Charles Mills. The commercial row was originally a four-storey building topped with a balustrade, and a fifth storey was added circa 1915 when 14 James Street North was remodelled in a similar architectural style and an overpass connection was constructed between the two buildings.

11 to 15 King Street East, known as the Mills Building, was constructed for the Mills Brothers retail business in 1903 on the site of their former three-storey building that was destroyed by fire that same year. In 1904, Stanley Mills & Company Limited purchased 14 James Street North and renovated the building circa 1915 when it began to operate as the Mills Hardware Store and a rear addition was constructed to connect it to 11-15 King Street East to the south.

Stanley Mills and Company started in 1888 as a hardware store at John and Jackson streets. By 1896 the business had expanded to sell dry goods, clothing, and groceries along with a renowned china department, becoming Hamilton's first department store. The company moved to this King St. location in 1893. 60,000 people walked by their front doors every 10 hours at this prime location. The business was incorporated as Stanley Mills & Co. in 1900 and was sold in 1920. After Stanley Mills & Co. closed, Herbert S. Mills opened his renowned china shop in a portion of the building

(11 King) in 1924, one of the first shops in North America to sell fine bone china. The shop earned such a reputation that Franklin D. Roosevelt's mother came to the store in the 1930s to buy china for the White House. Herbert S. Mills China Shop closed in 1983.



Here is the building prior to Herbert S. Mills china shop when Mills Hardware occupied 11-15 King St. E.

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11-15 King St. East ...continued

With Herbert S. Mills Gift Shop occupying 11 King St. E., John Northway & Sons department store, a popular women's clothing store, leased the rest of the building from the Mills family from 1925 until 1960. The building grew to include five sales floors, escalators, and elevators with uniformed operators. The store's departments carried exclusive fashion lines and were home to the famous "Bromleigh" coats and suits. Northway's closed with bankruptcy in 1963. Subway and Money Mart now occupy this space.



Hamilton Public Library
Interior of Herbert S. Mills Gift Shop



Hamilton Public Library
Closing Day for Herbert S. Mills Gift Shop, 1983



A summer window display out front of Northway's



A view of Northway's and Herbert S. Mills Gift Shop with Tamblyn drugs located next door at 17 King St. East.