

# Memory Lane

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## Commerce Place (Bank of Hamilton)

1 King Street West is the eastern tower of a two-tower office complex known as Commerce Place, also consisting of 21 King Street West. The structure was designed by architects Pellow & Associates Architect Inc. and constructed between 1987 and 1990 on the site of fifteen 19th-century and early-20th century buildings spanning from 15 to 45 King Street West, 9 to 17 MacNab Street South and 2 to 16 James Street South.

Commerce Place was constructed for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, who was located on the site previously in a ten-storey building constructed in the Italian Renaissance style in 1892 as the head office of the Bank of Hamilton and enlarged in 1907.



The Bank of Commerce stands tall in the background of Santa Claus' Castle in Gore Park, 1976.



The architect, Charles Mills', drawing of the Bank of Hamilton Building's addition in 1907.

The Canadian Bank of Commerce dates back to 1865 and the first Hamilton branch was chartered in 1867. The Bank of Commerce merged with the Imperial Bank, becoming the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) in 1960. In 1985 the 93-year-old banking building which stood on the southwest corner of King and James Streets was demolished to make way for the new office complex.

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# Commerce Place ...continued

The former Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce Building had been a fixture in the Gore Park streetscape since the late-19th century and acted as the backdrop for a number of significant events in Hamilton's history including the Human Fly incident on Peace Day on November 11, 1918. This involved Harry H. Gardiner climbing the building to help support financing of war bonds. The Bank of Hamilton opened 128 branches across western Ontario and western Canada. In 1923 they merged with the Canadian Bank of Commerce. In 1985 the building was demolished to make way for the construction of these two towers. The east tower was completed in 1987 and the west in 1990.



This interior is of the Ladies Branch entrance of the Bank of Hamilton building at the s/w corner of King and James, ca 1922.

One unique part of the Bank of Hamilton's branch was opening the first women's only branch. One of the most prominent and successful banks in Hamilton's history was the Bank of Hamilton located at this location next to the head office. The branch was directed and operated by women and was created in an effort by the bank to recognize the growing importance of women. Women were urged to make free use of the writing tables, telephones, and rest rooms, whether or not they were regular customers.