

Memory Lane

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E. & C. Gurney Company (Club 77)

The manufacturing of cast iron stoves was at one time big business in Hamilton. One of the largest producers of these stoves was the E. C. Gurney Company. 77 King William Street was originally built in the mid-19th century as part of the E. & C. Gurney Company's industrial complex that amassed nearly the entire block bounded by John, Rebecca, Catharine and King William Streets.

Brothers Charles and Edward Gurney established the E. & C. Gurney Company stove foundry with \$1,400 of capital at John and Rebecca Streets in 1843 shortly after arriving in Hamilton from Utica, New York.

After the passing of the founders, their nephew John Tilden became director and the firm was renamed Gurney Tilden until finally it was known as The Hamilton Stove and Heater Company.

In 1844, Alexander Carpenter established a tin and stoveware store at John and King William Streets. By 1845, the three men became partners in a firm known as the Gurney and Carpenter Iron Foundry. After Alexander Carpenter retired from the business in 1863 the Gurney brothers changed the name to the E. & C. Gurney Company (E.C.G.). Within the next few years the company acquired branches across Canada including Dundas, Montreal and Winnipeg. In 1868, the company bought out the John McGee Phoenix Foundry Company of Toronto and the E. & C. Gurney Company became the largest stove manufacturer in Canada. According to 1870 city directory – The foundry E & C Gurney is the most extensive of its kind in the Dominion of Canada situated at 33 John St. North. The buildings are brick and four storeys high with basement with moulding shop, store house, and carpenter house. The hoisting apparatus is operated by steam and every improvement to save labour is taken advantage of. 100 workers were employed and manufactured castings, stoves, fire place grates, etc. The foundry turned out \$200,000 worth of wares annually.

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E. & C. Gurney Company ...continued

A four-storey office building and warehouse were added to Hamilton's John and Rebecca Street location in 1875, and a few years later the company bought up the remaining buildings on the block, now covering the entire area bounded by John, King William, Rebecca, and Catharine Streets. After Edward Gurney passed away in 1883, his shares were bought by John Tilden (Edward's nephew by marriage), who worked his way up to a full partner of the company. When Charles Gurney died later that decade the company was dissolved and part of the assets were used to establish the Gurney, Tilden Company in Hamilton in the John Street plant.

In 1910, the Gurney, Tilden Company was taken over by the Hamilton Stove and Heater Company. By the mid-20th century, the main office and buildings fronting into John Street North housed a variety of new businesses, including Victoria Leather and Hamilton Chewing Gum Limited, while Canada Coach Lines Limited operated their garage and repairs shop out of the central plant buildings.

The majority of the lot bounded by John, Rebecca, Catharine and King William Streets, where the Gurney, Tilden plant operated until 1910, is now a parking lot. The remaining building, located at 77 King William Street, is the former moulding shop, constructed in the mid-19th century and expanded in the early-20th century. In 1947, the building (formerly 87 King William Street) housed Grafton Garage and later housed the Hamilton Spectator's garage in the first storey and paper stage in the basement. In its most recent incarnation the building has housed a variety of restaurants and nightclubs including Brandy's (circa 1988) and currently Club 77 and Dirty Dogs Saloon.



The Hamilton Spectator garage at King William and Catherine in 1959. The Garage is still visible here today as the back of Club 77/ Dirty Dogs Saloon.