

Memory Lane

EXPLORE THE PAST OF DOWNTOWN HAMILTON

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Gore Park (James St. - Hughson St.)



This is a photograph of businesses on the southeast corner of King and James during the 1870s including Brown, Gillespie and Company, Wm. Boice & Co., as well as the west end of Gore Park. This would later become the site of the Birk's Building. Today we see FirstOntario Credit Union and Scotiabank at this corner.

The Bank of British North America building and Kerr Building were designed by noted Ontario architect, William Thomas (1790-1860) and stood on the south side of Gore Park.



The Bank of British North America is the recessed building beside John Brown & Co. The building immediately to the left is the Kerr Block, where the wholesale goods firm of A. & T.C. Kerr opened shop in 1848. A rare pre-Confederation survival, the facade of the Kerr building still stands in Gore Park.

The Bank of British North America occupied the recessed building from 1846 until 1918. This was originally the site of the Promenade House Tavern, until 1846. This building was designed by Thomas in the Renaissance revival style was completed in 1847. In 1918, the Bank of British North America merged with the Bank of Montreal, and in 1922 the building was purchased by Hamilton Hydro-Electric.



Pictured is the Hamilton Hydro Electric Offices and Sales Room at 12 King St. East, advertised as exclusive retailers of many of the most reliable electrical appliances including electric water heating, Crosley Shelvador Refrigerators, and Moffat Electric Ranges. It was later known as Hamilton Electric Light Company and then Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, or Ontario Hydro. The building was demolished in 1953.



Following the demolition of the Hydro-Electric building, the new 12 King Street East was designed by architects McDonnell and Lenz and constructed by Pigott Construction Company in 1954 for the Bank of Nova Scotia. Today Scotiabank continues to operate here in Gore Park.

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Gore Park ...continued



Knox, Morgan & Co.

Next to The Bank of British North America was this stretch of buildings including the Kerr Building, 18 -22 King St. East, and the Skinner Building, 24 King St. East pictured in the 1890s.

18-20 King Street East was constructed circa 1840 and early occupants were Archibald and Thomas C. Kerr, who established their successful wholesale dry goods business there as early as 1848. 22 King Street East was constructed circa 1840 for H. E. Smith. By the 1850s, both buildings were under single ownership. Architect William Thomas was considered a key figure in Canadian architecture, designing important buildings throughout Ontario as well as in other Provinces. The building's composition, design and materials provide a representative example of Renaissance Revival architecture dating to the pre-Confederation period and display a high-degree of craftsmanship. The buildings retain their original architectural features on the upper levels of their front façades and are among very few pre-Confederation stone commercial buildings remaining in Hamilton.

In May of 1941 the Active Service Canteen could be found at 20 King Street East. Thousands of men and women came through Hamilton while training for military service overseas and a group of volunteers, formed under the auspices of the Hamilton Citizens Committee for War Services, recognized the need for a gathering place for these men and women. The canteen was located on the second floor. Financing of the canteen was made

possible by the Hamilton Skating Club, along with various mens service clubs. Staffed entirely by volunteers, in the first year of operation, about 160,000 men attended, taking advantage of the fun and comfort offered by the games room, weekly dances, the coffee shop, and reading rooms. By 1945, attendance at the canteen since its opening in 1941 had been well over 720,000 men. The canteen closed on November 17, 1945.



In 1941 the Active Service Canteen opened in 20 King St. E. the games room of the canteen.

24 King Street East was constructed in 1875-6 for James A. Skinner. Skinner was a crockery merchant who opened his "China Palace" at another location around 1850 and this building was built as an expansion. James A. Skinner and Co. was recognized as "the largest importer of crockery, glassware, etc. and largest shippers to Manitoba, British Columbia and the Northwest". Later, Minden's Ladies Wear operated in this location between 1924 and 1951. The building at 24 King Street East was originally designed and constructed in the Victorian Style of architecture with vertical brick coursing, stone window sills, metal hood mouldings and a metal cornice. Several alterations have been undertaken to the building and only the brick façade (painted), three window openings on the fourth level and the cornice and brackets remain.

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Gore Park ...continued

28 King Street East was constructed in 1874 for William H. Glassco & Sons to house their furrier business, established in 1843 and first located in a building further to the east along King Street East. The building housed a large cold storage vault that was considered to be advanced at time. G.F. Glassco & Co. operated in this location until 1931 and a succession of other furrier businesses subsequently operated out of the building. At the time of its construction, the building was less elaborate than the buildings on either side; however, the building has retained most of its original architectural features on the upper levels of its front façade.



Some of the now vacant Gore buildings as they once were including the popular Honey Dew Coffee Shop. This restaurant, famous for its signature orange drink, was located on the south side of Gore Park from 1942 until 1971.



Wilfred Larsh Paints Flagpole in Gore Park, 1959. In the background is the stretch of businesses from James St. to Hughson St. in Gore Park full of shops.

30 King Street East was built in 1874 for Mrs. William (Emily) Gourlay who resided with her husband, Colonel William Gourlay in the Italianate villa at the top of Beckett's Drive, known as Barton Lodge. This Mountain brow estate was built in 1836 for Emily's uncle James Whyte. The Whyte family was renowned for its alleged connection with British royalty. Emily herself bore a remarkable likeness to Queen Victoria explained by the claim that her mother was the queen's half sister. The first tenant of 30 King Street East was Tristram and John W. Bickle, druggists, who remained here until about 1881. Tristram Bickle established his drug business in Hamilton in 1835 dealing in a variety of patent medicines and remedies. Joined by his son John in 1848, the firm of T. Bickle and Son gained a wide reputation throughout Ontario.

30 King Street East was occupied by Howel Brothers furriers from 1919 to 1965 and Ceasar's Dinner Theatre from the 1980s to the early-21st century. 30 King Street East was demolished in 2011.



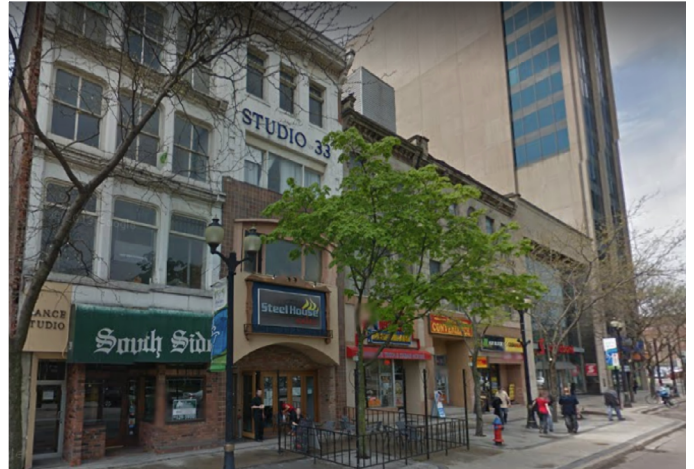
30 King St. East when it was Howel Brothers Fur can be seen here to the right of White Grill.

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Gore Park ...continued



The building as Zig Zag Zebra before its demolition.



This is how the stretch of businesses appeared in 2012 before the buildings became vacant.