

# Memory Lane

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## John Sopinka Court House (Former Post Office)

Before the John Sopinka Court House was at the corner of King Street and John in Gore Park there was an ornate post office building, but before that was the McInnes building. This was a four storey wholesale dry goods warehouse that was built in 1856.



The burnt out shell of the McInnes Building on the south-west corner, King Street East and John Streets. Note the burned building across the street. Excerpt taken from "History of the Hamilton Fire Department", page 123: "August 1, 5:45 p.m., 1879, was the date of the famous McInnes fire, which destroyed the magnificent block...The above fire jumped across the street to the Sanford, Vail and Bickley Factory, and Dixon Bros.' Fruit Store. The Larkin Hall, John Street North, caught fire from flying sparks, also the Colored Church on Rebecca Street, which was burned down."

In 1882 the federal government purchased the site of the old McInnes building. The doors of the John Street Post Office were opened to the public on October 23, 1886 and stayed open for 48 years. The building was demolished in 1935. The style of architecture was described as a mixture of Elizabethan and Corinthian.



Erected on the site of the earlier 1886 Post Office, the new Dominion Public Building was built to accommodate not only the post office but also Customs and excise, national health, immigration and various other federal departments, all brought together for the first time in Hamilton under one roof.

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# John Sopinka Court House ...continued

The Modern-Classical building was six storeys high with the main entrance located on John Street. The structure was erected as part of a Depression works program introduced by the government in 1934 under the Public Works Construction Act. Hamilton's Dominion Public Building has been ranked as one of the three best examples of the large federal public buildings which were erected across Canada between 1934 and 1939. The Hamilton firm of Hutton and Souter, well known for other major works such as the Cathedral of Christ the King, provided the plans.

The main Post Office was located in this building for over fifty years, closing in 1991, when the Province of Ontario purchased the building for conversion to a new court facility, consolidating the Provincial and General Division courts in what is now the John Sopinka Courthouse.



The building in 1955 as the post office as seen from the corner of John and Main Streets.