

# Memory Lane

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## The MacKay Building and Victoria Hall

66 King Street East, known as the MacKay building (currently Burrito Boyz), was designed by architects Bond & Smith (Toronto) and constructed circa 1914 for steamship operator Adam Brown MacKay. The MacKay Building is one of only two known examples in Hamilton of the work of Toronto architects Bond & Smith, who also designed the former Bank of Nova Scotia building at 54 King Street East. Adam Brown MacKay (1865-1928) played a major role in the development and organization of marine transportation on the Great Lakes. He began his career in the offices of his father, Aeneas D. MacKay, a ship owner and wood merchant in Hamilton. IN 1894, Adam entered into partnership with his brother, Robert Osborne MacKay and formed the R.O. & A.B. MacKay Company. They owned and controlled the Fort William and Hamilton Navigation Company, and the Ontario Steamship Company. The MacKay family owned the dock at the foot of James Street for over 60 years and was the second oldest marine shipping business in Canada.

The MacKay Building originally housed Men's Furnishings Merchant William McLelland from 1914 to 1923. The building has housed a variety of other businesses including the office of steamship agent A.B. MacKay (1922-1928), Smith-Morton Optical Company (1924-1930), optometrists Morton-Tweedle Limited (1931-1947), optometrists Morton & Spence Limited (1948-1957) and Foster's Fashion Shops Limited (1963-1979). In 1964, 66 King Street East was renamed the Foster Building by Foster's Fashion Shops Limited, who also joined the building with 68-70 King Street East (Victoria Hall).



Girl Guides and Boy Scouts Annual Parade 1958 (photo found in Gary Evan's book *The Prints of The Steel City*). The Foster's store can be seen on the left with the white store front.

Beside the MacKay building is 68 King Street East, known originally as Victoria Hall, which was designed and built in 1887-88 by architect William Stewart form Alexander Bruce, a local barrister employed many years by the Canada Life Assurance Company. Victoria Hall has the distinction of being the only known example in the downtown of an applied metal facade, dating from the 1880's. The building counts among the last of the robustly decorative, High Victorian commercial blocks that once were prominent on the Gore. The elaborate metal decoration, designed to imitate highly ornate stone carving, kept pace with splendidly baroque masonry work of the Post Office, erected next door just the year before (demolished 1930's).

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# MacKay Building and Victoria Hall ...continued

Victoria Hall is a three-and-a-half-storey, commercial building designated as a national historic site because it is of national historic and architectural significance. It is a superior and rare example of a commercial building with a decorative, architectonic, sheet-metal façade, which is completely hand- rather than machine-made. The building is an irreplaceable element in King Street's continuum of commercial architecture dating from the pre-confederation era to the present. It is a very rare Canadian example of an in-situ, hand-made, sheet-metal façade and is one of the earliest and most architecturally accomplished of the surviving sheet metal façades in Canada. The façade is essentially intact.

Scott Paint & Wallpaper Co Ltd as of 1946. The building has been home to Gerhard Heintzman Pianos, A. Carey & Son Radio, J.H. Herring tea brokers, the Empire Newspaper, Canada Cycle Company and Bessie Brown Hats. A high-fashion women's store named Foster's moved into Victoria Hall in 1952 and about 10 years later it also took over the MacKay space next door. When the Jackson Square complex was constructed during the 1970s, Fosters abandoned the space 1979 and it was left vacant for decades.



This image of the buildings between Hughson and John Streets in Gore Park dates back to 1886, before Victoria Hall and the MacKay building were staples in the park.

It wasn't until the 2000s that these properties were once again renovated and businesses once again moved in. The MacKay building is currently home to Burrito Boyz while Victoria Hall houses Redchurch Café.



A view of the buildings before the ground floors became businesses again and apartments were renovated on the upper floors.