

# Memory Lane

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## The Right House

35 King St E., The Right House, was Hamilton's first department store. In 1847 Thomas C. Watkins opened a small hardware store on James Street but a short time later he closed this location and opened a wholesale warehouse at 19 King St. E. (where the Woolworth building stands next door). When Watkins returned to selling dry goods he built The Right House at its current location. From 1890 to 1893, Watkins built the new premises for The Right House facing Gore Park. It was bigger, bolder and better equipped than any of its neighbouring rowhouse stores. In the interest of promoting its modern aspect, The Right House design employed many of the fashionable features of the day: running arcades, columns and stone arches busily articulated the street facade; contemporary pressed metalwork provided the crowning decoration to eaves and parapet (now gone); window openings contained so much plate glass that the building was nicknamed the Crystal Palace; and modern conveniences such as the elevator offered an added degree of comfort and class to shopping excursions.

The architect for the building was William Stewart & Son. The official opening as The Right House was in 1893. In 1903 following the death of Watkins, his sons and grandsons took over the business and it remained a family business until it was sold in 1909. In 1910, a basement and an additional floor was added to the building.



The Right House decorated for 1913 centennial anniversary.

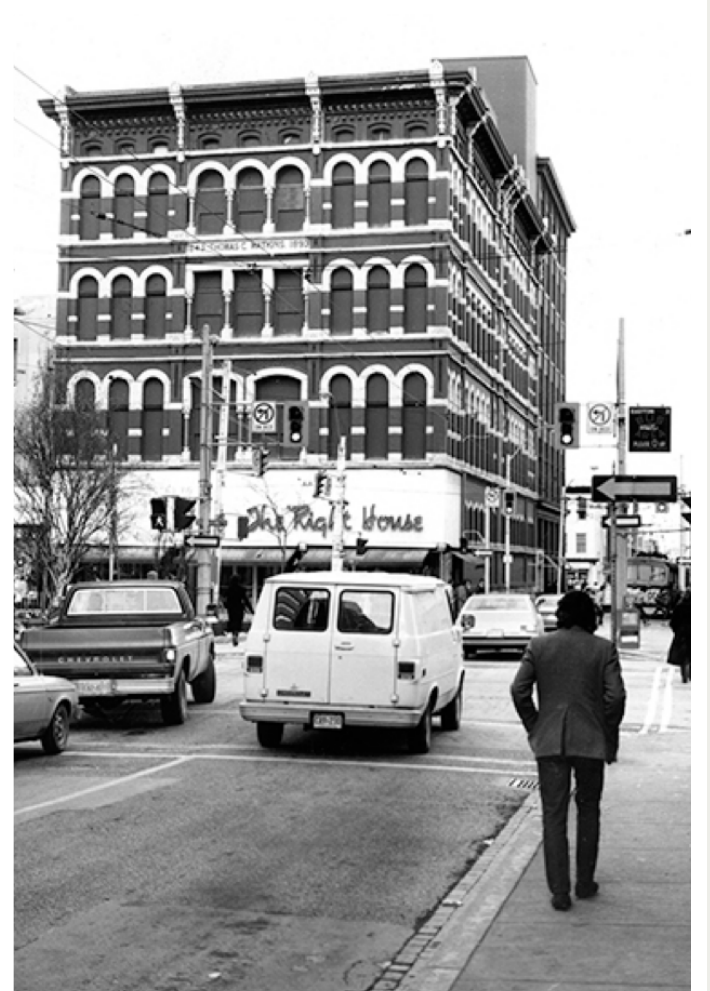
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# The Right House ...continued



The Right House as it appeared in 1953.

Before the Right House, there were no modern department stores providing one-stop shopping for dry goods, clothing, hardware and more. It was also the most modern department store in Canada including phones in all departments, credit buying, a satisfaction guarantee policy, free home delivery, female clerks, live fashion shows and even an emergency ward. The store closed in 1983 and remained vacant. In 1989 it reopened as a mall called Park Place. By 1995 it was bought by its current owners, Aragon Property Management. Watkins' building was not only the first but it is now also the last of the large nineteenth century department stores to survive intact in the city.



The building pictured in 1981.