

# Memory Lane

EXPLORE THE PAST OF DOWNTOWN HAMILTON

VIEW MORE  
PROPERTIES  
HERE

## Woolworth's

19 to 31 King Street East was the site of the F.W. Woolworth Company Limited for most of the 20th century, with the first store having opened in Hamilton in 1902. Named after founder Frank Winfield Woolworth, the Woolworth Department store chain originated in Utica, New York in 1879 and was built upon the five-and-dime motto.



Woolworth storefront before fire in 1947.

The Woolworth store was previously a 19th-century three-storey brick commercial building at 27 to 31 King Street East before it was gutted by fire in 1947. Fire was reported at the F.W. Woolworth and Company, 29 King Street East shortly after 10 p.m. on Monday March 24, 1947. The fire completely destroyed the three storey building. The Right House, Tamblyn's Drug Store, Northway's and Loblaw's Groceteria received smoke and water damage. The estimated loss was close to \$1,000,000.00.



Smoke billowing from the building on March 24, 1947.

Following the fire, the building was razed, along with the three commercial buildings to the west, 19 to 25 King Street East, and in 1949 a new three-storey commercial building was constructed with brick, steel tile and concrete block. 17 King Street East, which had also been damaged by the fire, was incorporated into the new development by refacing the front to create a uniform Art Deco-inspired façade from 17 to 31 King Street East. After the fire a familiar name, Toronto business man Ed Mirvish, bought up the smoke-damaged merchandise and used it to start his new store, Honest Ed's, in Toronto the following year.

continued...



# Woolworth's ...continued

When it opened in 1949, the new store was the largest of all 147 Woolworth stores across Canada. The store underwent extensive renovations in 1966 and was purchased by an outside firm in 1990 before closing that same year. The building was occupied by a Bargain Land discount store in the 1990s, sat vacant in the late 1990s and was renovated circa 1998 to accommodate four separate ground-floor commercial units. Currently the building houses East Liberty Tax, Kenzo Ramen, City Mart, and PATH Employment Services on the ground floor.



Images of some of the departments inside the Woolworth store including records, home décor, fashion and cosmetics.



The view of Woolworth's in 1960, this is how the building looked when it was rebuilt after the fire.



A photo of waitresses in the Woolworth restaurant on the main floor in 1966. Coffee or a full meal were offered. Woolworth's also featured an 82-stool lunch counter with a microwave, for "atomic-age service."



continued...



# Woolworth's ...continued

Looking even further back in time before the Woolworth store, below is an advertisement for A.R. Kerr & Co. at 31 and 33 King Street East from 1894. The ad reads "Ready-Made Outing Costumes. The most elegant and nobby goods ever shown by us. The have just arrived and will be on exhibition to-morrow morning. Composed as follows: Three shades in Pique and White Duck, beautifully made, and up to date in style, four pieces in them. Umbrella Skirt, Tattersal Vest, Long Eton Coat, and Parasol to match. Every lady should see them. To see them is to buy them, a few will resist the temptation. They are so nice, and moderate in price."



The Woolworth's cosmetic department.

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 1894.

DRY GOODS.

**READY-MADE**

**OUTING COSTUMES**

The most elegant and nobby goods ever shown by us. They have just arrived and will be on exhibition to-morrow morning.

COMPOSED AS FOLLOWS:

Three Shades in Pique and White Duck, beautifully made, and up to date in style, four pieces in them. Umbrella Skirt, Tattersal Vest, Long Eton Coat, and Parasol to match.

Every lady should see them. To see them is to buy them, a few will resist the temptation. They are so nice, and moderate in price.

**A. R. KERR & Co**

31 AND 33 KING STREET EAST.