

Memory Lane

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The Spectator Building (105 King St. E.)

105 King Street East, also known as the Spectator Building, was designed by Hamilton architects McPhie & Kelly, constructed in 1920 and was occupied by the Spectator Printing Company by 1921. The office building was built to connect to the printing plant located to the rear of the site at the southwest corner of King William and Catharine Streets. The construction of the new Spectator Building in 1920 represented the growing demand for newspaper and the need for larger accommodations. In the 1950s, the building was expanded and remodelled as a result of diversification in content and increasing demand. The building is part of the evolution of the newspaper as it grew from four pages to its contemporary form. The Hamilton Spectator occupied the upper floors of the building from 1921 to 1976.



In this 1956 photo the large Hamilton Spectator sign can be seen on top of the building on the right. The Spectator was a fixture for more than half a century across from the Royal Connaught hotel until it moved to its location on Frid Street. The Spectator had its office and plant here, with a giant weather and temperature billboard on the roof. CoMotion currently occupies the third floor (once home to The Spec's advertising department and cafeteria).



The Spectator Building pictured in 1946. Part of the Rainbow Shops awning can be seen on the left. A.G. Gaul Jewellers can also be seen.

Local 129 of the International Typographical Union walked off the job at the Hamilton Spectator on Thursday May 30, 1946 at 6 p.m. The union issued this statement: "As of Friday, May 31, 1946, local unions of the International Typographical Unions inaugurated work stoppage in the composing rooms of the Southam Company Limited operated newspapers, the Hamilton Spectator, the Edmonton Journal and the Ottawa Citizen. This action was authorized by the membership in January, when lockout votes were taken by the various local unions in these plants.

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The Spectator Building ...continued

"Since November 1945, the Typographical Unions have endeavoured patiently to negotiate their differences with the Southam Company Limited with out avail."

On Friday May 31, 1946 management issued a Hamilton Spectator with this statement: "the Spectator, for the first time in its nearly one hundred years of existence, must publish to-day in this abbreviated form. There is no alternative."

There was no resolution to this strike. The Hamilton Spectator hired workers to operate the presses and carried on the operation of the paper. There was violence on the picket line as these "scab workers" went in to work. The striking workers did not go back to work. This strike has never been a settled.



Pickers and a truck with signs supporting the striking workers parked in front of the Spectator building on King Street East in 1946.

The ground floor units of the Spectator Building, which consists of 105 to 115 King Street East, have been occupied by a variety of businesses including Woolworths (1920s-1940s), The Rainbow Shops (1946-2012) and jeweller A.G. Gaul (1952-1980s). The building was renamed the Rainbow Mews in 1978. In 2012, the building was occupied by four businesses in the ground floor including Rainbow Now! In unit 105, Bruno's Schools of Hair Design in unit 107, Kelly's Unisex Clubwear in unit 109, and Gift & Glam Boutique in unit 111.

William Ginsberg opened Rainbow Bridal in 1927 to sell suits and coats. He added bridal wear a year later. It was located where Jackson Square sits now. The shop moved to its final location, directly across from the front doors of the Royal Connaught, in 1951. Barry Sobel took over the store from his great-uncle in 1978. Ginsberg's son, Joel, ran the shop and another bridal salon for 20 years, before Sobel carried on the business.



The building as it appeared in 2014. The store fronts have since undergone renovations and CoMotion coworking space is located on the third floor.