

Gooderham & Worts by A. H. Hider, 1896

Victorian Industrial Architecture at the Distillery District

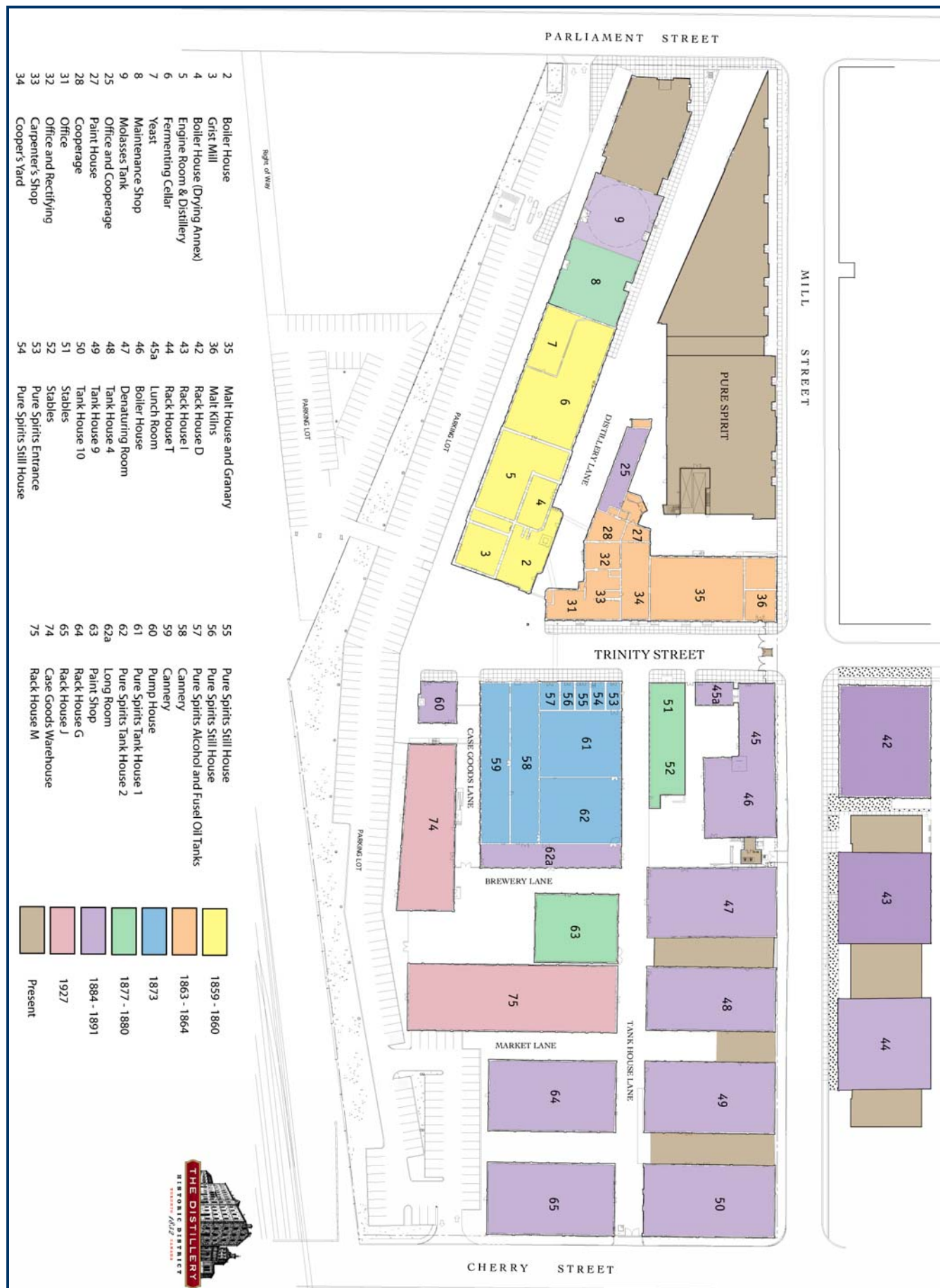
The Distillery District is recognized as a national historic site because of its unique collection of unusually harmonious, high-quality Victorian industrial buildings. This is a brief guide to the 40-plus heritage buildings on the site. We suggest you start your tour at the Stone Distillery at the south end of the site, move north along the west side of Trinity Street, then south along the east side of Trinity Street, and branch out as the spirit moves you.

Architects

Most of the buildings on the site were designed by David Roberts, Sr. (1810-1881) and his son, David Roberts Jr. (1845-1907). The Irish-born engineer-millwright David Roberts Sr. emigrated to Toronto in 1844 where he made contact with Gooderham & Worts with the results found here. His Canadian-born son also cut his architectural teeth on distillery expansion. In addition to his fine industrial projects, David Roberts Jr. contributed other architectural gems to Toronto, notably the Romanesque Revival Gooderham (Flat Iron) Building at Wellington and Church, and the magnificent George Gooderham residence (now York Club) at Bloor and St. George. Unfortunately, the architects of some distillery buildings remain unknown and uncelebrated.

Evolution of the Site

In 1832, brothers-in-law James Worts and William Gooderham built a windmill in the wilderness and launched a business that would become the largest distillery in the British Empire. Although the windmill tower has disappeared, most of the Victorian structures built between 1859 and 1895 remain. They rose in several distinct phases: first along the west side of Trinity Street between 1859 and 1864, with a few later additions; then along the east side of Trinity street in the mid-1870s; then further east and north between the 1880s and 1895. Following industrial convention, the buildings were numbered.



Building Groups

Stone Distillery (Buildings 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)



Designed by David Roberts Sr. and constructed in 1859-60, Gooderham & Worts' Stone Distillery is the oldest surviving building on the site. Composed of Kingston limestone, the building was parallel to the original waterfront and served by both Lake ships and railway cars passing along what is now Stone House Walk. The Stone Distillery housed three related functions: milling, fermenting and distilling, and was supported by an engine room and boiler houses. Built to last, with walls 3 ½ feet thick at the base, the classically proportioned, L-shaped building rose five stories high and is still the largest building on the site. Dormer windows were added in the 1870s. Fire destroyed most of the wooden interior in October 1869, but the exterior walls and machinery survived so the distillery was back in business by spring 1870. While the south façade remains much as it was in 1860, the interior has changed repeatedly in response to new processes and needs. The north façade of the building has also experienced many changes over time. (Illustration depicts the Stone Distillery in 1863.)

Cooperage (Buildings 28, 32, 33, 34)



Designed by David Roberts Sr., the red-brick Cooperage was built on the west side of Trinity Street and north of the Stone Distillery in 1863-64, immediately after the Maltings complex to its the north (see below). Featuring a limestone base and Roberts' distinctive arcaded corbelling brickwork, the Cooperage buildings cluster around a tall tower with a picturesque cupola that was used as an alcohol rectifying tower after the old windmill was demolished. Barrels were critical to the distillery operation. In the 1860s when G&W could pump out two million gallons of alcohol per year, some 40,000 barrels were required, making barrel-construction and maintenance a major operation. Over time, the buildings were used for various purposes. For many years the elegant doorway to Building 32 (off Distillery Lane) led to G&W offices and boardroom. Some say that the reason the façade of the Pure Spirits buildings across Trinity Street is so elegant (see below) is because William Gooderham could observe the building from his office. (The 1884 painting depicts the Cooperage at centre left and the Maltings in distance.)

Maltings (Buildings 35, 36)



Also designed by David Roberts Sr. and built in 1863-64, the Malt House and the Kiln Building stretch north from the Cooperage along the west side of Trinity Street, providing a long, harmonious streetscape. Both buildings were originally three stories high, featuring the panel-and-pier articulation and brick detailing found elsewhere on the site. Between 1880 and 1884, the Kiln Building was raised to its current height and windows were bricked in along both Mill and Trinity Streets. A second, taller ventilator tower once rose from the west side of the Kiln Building. The remaining cupola is purely decorative, as are the chimneys. The two buildings worked together to produce the malt essential for making alcohol from grain.

East Boiler House complex (Buildings 45, 45a, 46, 51, 52)



Located at the corner of Mill and Trinity, this complex forms the gateway to the east side of Trinity Street. Set behind lower buildings along Trinity Street is the group's dominant structure, Building 46, which began as a boiler house, but was converted into a bonded warehouse by 1943. The boiler house determined the basic form, but the excise function is evident in bricked over windows and doors. Designed by David Roberts Jr. and finished in 1886, the Boiler House is an immense, one-storey, high-ceilinged brick building standing on a limestone base. The exterior walls feature the piers-and-recessed-panels and the sawtooth brick patterning found elsewhere on the site; and the distinctive, but now truncated chimney is located in the middle of the west wall. A portion of this wall forms the east wall of the adjacent building (formerly a machine shop, now a restaurant). The oldest buildings in this group are the 1877-1880 Stables further down Trinity Street.

Pure Spirits (Buildings 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 62)



Located on the east side of Trinity Street, the Pure Spirits complex contains seven buildings that are linked physically, functionally, and architecturally. Designed by David Roberts Jr., these exquisite buildings were constructed in 1873 for alcohol purification and storage. Although Roberts probably oversaw the rebuilding of the Stone Distillery after the fire of 1869, the Pure Spirits buildings were his first solo effort. Stills were located in the front sections of the structure fronting on Trinity Street, while storage tanks were located in one-storey warehouses behind. Given the potentially explosive nature of the process, the Pure Spirits buildings contain large amounts of glass that would blow-out to save the buildings. The architect solved the practical problem with unusual elegance. Over time, the buildings changed both physically and functionally, but the architectural coherence remained in tact. (The 1918 photograph shows the Trinity Street façade topped by a cupola that no longer exists.)

Cannery (Buildings 58, 59)



new East Boiler House.

Constructed in 1873 and abutting the Pure Spirits Complex, the Cannery contributes to the overall character of the east side of Trinity Street. The 1884 watercolour shows the south façade of the Cannery when it was only 3-storeys high and had a slightly pitched roof. Originally built as a case storage building, the redbrick structure was converted to other uses, including bottle, case and barrel storage of alcohol, and later antifreeze canning and beverage bottling. The third floor was completely rebuilt and a partial fourth floor added sometime between 1896 and 1918. The Cannery is connected to the 1927 Case Goods Warehouse (Building 74) by an enclosed bridge and to the old railway siding by a sloping conveyor. The chimney in the background of the painting rose from the

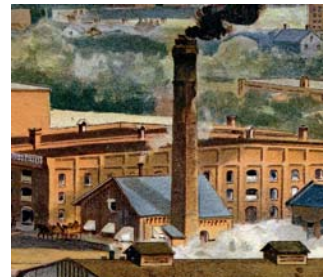
Rack and Tank Houses (Buildings 42, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 63, 64, 65)



modern buildings. (Photograph shows Building 48, a classic tank house on the north side of Tank House Lane.)

As the distillery business expanded and legislation requiring aging of alcohol was passed, storage space became a pressing concern. Between 1879 and 1891, 12 rack houses (for barrels) and tank houses were built around the old core. Of these, ten remain, including Buildings 42, 43, and 44 north of Mill Street; and Buildings 47, 48, 49, 50, 63, 64, and 65 to the east of Trinity Street. The common size and form (mostly one-storey boxes with gently sloping rooflines and few windows) and regular spacing contribute to the site's particular industrial character. David Roberts Jr. was the architect for this distinctive group, including the largest Victorian storage building: 6-storey Rack House D (Building 42) commanding the northeast corner of Mill and Trinity. Several others form the bases for

Fire Pump House (Building 60)



The new warehouse sat atop a 400,000 gallon water reservoir connected to the fire pumps next door.

Built in 1895, the Fire Pump House at the south end of Trinity Street was the last Victorian building constructed on the Gooderham & Worts site. Designed by David Roberts Jr., the Pump House was used for fire protection and pumping alcohol around the site. The main façade fronts onto Trinity Street and features fine brick detailing such as the distinctive arcaded corbels framing a steeply pitched gable. Originally, a tall brick chimney dominated the south façade (only the bottom part remains), and the building was close to railway tracks for delivery of coal and exchange of goods. Just east of the Pump House is the 1927 Case Goods Warehouse (Building 74), whose post-Victorian design nevertheless reflects its earlier neighbours in materials (brick, although a different colour) and simple panel-and-pier box form.