

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

INTERVIEW NUMBER ONE: Paul Allsop

Interview With: Paul Allsop, former Vice President and Plant Manager, Gooderham & Worts, Toronto

Conducted By: Christopher Andreae, Historica Research Limited

Location: Hiram Walker Offices, Windsor (Walkerville), Ontario

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Notes: Problems occurred with transcribing the first two pages of the interview. Therefore the wording of a few phrases may not agree exactly with the tape.

Start of Interview

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

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Chris: Paul, why don't we start with just the technical part of the identification, who you are and when did your association start with Gooderham and Worts?

Paul: My name is Paul Allsop. I have worked in the distilling industry for about 27 years and in 1984, I was transferred to Gooderham and Worts in Toronto from Hiram Walker and Sons in Windsor, Ontario. I was transferred there to take over as Vice President and Plant Manager at the retirement of George Wilton who had 40 some odd years at Hiram Walker. That took place in August, 1984 and I was there until August, 1990.

Chris: OK. After that you came back to....

Paul: Then I was transferred back to Walkerville. My present position is Business Development Manager for a Department of Hiram Walker called Canadian Lakes Distillers.

Chris: I am interested in the former relationship of Hiram Walker to Gooderham and Worts on the Toronto property. I have always wondered how the two companies functioned. Actually, I ask you these questions because they are ones that always intrigued me. I assume that the Hiram Walker operation was a sales division that came to the Gooderham Worts property.

Paul: Yes. When I moved there, the sales division was not there and through my association with them and contact with them, I realized that they were in some very expensive property up in Yonge Street and the Vice President of Sales at the time, Doug Young and I talked about moving the offices of the sales into the plant site if we could renovate the plant site to obtain or to receive the numbers that they had in their offices.

Chris: So actually that is jumping ahead to one of the other questions that I had. It was vacant or you had the extra space in buildings that were empty by that point.

Paul: Yes. I would say that up to 60% of the buildings were empty.

Chris: And so Hiram Walker were, in effect, tenants to Gooderham and Worts. What about other companies like Consolidated Alcohol?

Paul: Consolidated Alcohol produced alcohol and industrial alcohols for the war effort and later produced acetone, when it was called British Acetones. It sort of came out of British Acetones.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: So it was the industrial alcohol side of the industry and Gooderham and Worts was the beverage alcohol arm. Another company on the Toronto property was the Barclay Distillery in Buildings 54, 55, 56 and 57 but that was long closed, was it not?

Paul: Yes, but Gooderham and Worts really operated that. It was more in name only a Barclay distillery. Any distiller can operate his stills under different licences as long as they produce a certain volume mandated by law every year, so that one distiller could have up to five licences. As long as they produce under that licence and record that production under that licence, you maintain the licence. If you don't produce under that licence, you lose the licence.

Chris: So, it doesn't matter what it is marketed as? Whether it is Barclay's or anything else? You just say so much is produced for..

Paul: Barclay's or Gooderham and Worts or for McGinnis Distillers. McGinnis Distillers started there. I believe it was Larry McGinnis, but I'm not sure, but he was a salesman for Gooderham and Worts and he bought his first alcohol from Gooderham and Worts. Then he spun off his own distillery.

Chris: It seemed to me when we first went through in 1990, you said that the office was above the pumphouse on the second floor there.

Paul: Yes, it was a McGinnis office at one time. That is where it started.

Chris: And he started off by purchasing alcohol and then set up his own distillery. But that was totally independent.

Paul: It was totally independent. Actually, it does not exist now. It is closed.

Chris: What about Barclay's?

Paul: Barclay's is still bottled under the Barclay name.

Chris: But here in Windsor?

Paul: We have a distillers licence here and in British Columbia for the Barclay name. We produce under the Barclay name. Once you maintain a production entity for a particular licence, you can do a variety of other things under that licence. First of all, you can't move the alcohol from one location to another unless you have a distillers licence. So we can't even legally ship it to anybody. You can't receive it unless you have either a manufacturers licence or a distillers licence. That is all mandated by law. So we can bottle under a licence. We can ship bulk under a licence. We can market under a licence. We can do all the things a distillers licence allows you to do once you do that production under that licence.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: Under your tenure at the plant, it was simply Gooderham and Worts and Consolidated Alcohol? Those were the two?

Paul: Right. What we did to maintain the Consolidated Alcohol's licence only, we would write Excise a letter; tell them that on January 5, we were going to produce rum spirits for Consolidated Alcohols and produce it until we had, I think, 5,000 gallons of rum spirit in our tanks under the Consolidated Alcohol's licence. Then we would stop production and go back into Gooderham and Worts production. Then on paper we would transfer that rum spirit Consolidated to Gooderham and Worts. Thus, maintaining the licence for Consolidated and, in fact, we actually had to hang a sign on the stills that said: "producing Consolidated alcohol".

Chris: Although it then went into beverage use?

Paul: It went into beverage use. It was transferred on the books to beverage use. It sounds surreptitious but that is exactly how we had to do it.

Chris: It is archaic rather than surreptitious, I suppose.

Paul: No comment.

Chris: Going backwards then, in terms of the relationship of Gooderham and Worts to Hiram Walker, again I notice when I went into the office, there is a big brass plaque that says Gooderham and Worts, Hiram Walker. Was that name maintained for licensing reasons because you don't market anything under Gooderham and Worts?

Paul: We market bonded stock under Gooderham and Worts right now and it is the only brand. The last one used to be the "Little Brown Jug" and I believe it's off the marketplace now. "Bonded Stock" is still a Gooderham's bonded stock and it is still sold throughout Canada, mostly in the Maritimes but you can get in the odd store.

Chris: So what is the advantage of Gooderham and Worts name?

Paul: Today?

Chris: Today. Is there a company?

Paul: There isn't a company, per se, but we have maintained the distilling licence for Gooderham and Worts. It is incorporated under the Province of Ontario rather than the Federal incorporation, but still as a distillers licence and the distillery here will produce a certain amount of product under the Gooderham and Worts distillers licence and then transfer it to Hiram Walker. So the name hasn't been lost, it is used as a distilling name for shipment. In fact, we are shipping to Japan under that licence now.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: What were you in Toronto? That was Gooderham and Worts?

Paul: That was Gooderham and Worts and we used our own product in Toronto to maintain our own licence.

Chris: So this was all lost when the distillery closed?

Paul: When the distillery closed, one of our sister distillers had to take over the production of Gooderham and Worts to maintain that licence because had no distiller in Canada or in the organization continued to produce under the name Gooderham and Worts, we would have lost our licence and then it would have disappeared.

Chris: You were in charge of a division called Gooderham and Worts?

Paul: As a separate distillery. It was an entity on its own.

Chris: Now it is simply just a licence?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: So that part of it has been lost, in a sense, when the distillery closed. Is that it? There is no office or divisions down here?

Paul: No.

Chris: But there was up until...

Paul: There was up until September, 1990.

Chris: As a division, how independent was it? Were production decisions, and so on, still made at a more senior level?

Paul: From our point of view, at Gooderham and Worts, Hiram Walker provided logistical support. They paid all the bills and they gave us a schedule of production of rum that was required for the corporate requirements and we would produce. We would then say, all right this is how much you need in a year. We would tell them when we were going to produce it and how we were going to produce and we would make all the arrangements to buy the molasses and produce it and store it and ship it and everything that any other distiller would do. We were very independent after, once they paid the bills. They never questioned us but we didn't abuse that function. We made the production from their production plans and that's the only contact that we had.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: Even to the point that you were responsible for whatever the molasses prices were?

Paul: I negotiated the molasses contract and the whole bit. None of it was done from here. Nobody here new how to buy molasses until we moved here.

Chris: What about other Hiram Walker subsidiaries like Corby's? It seems to me that I saw on a plan somewhere, Corby's had a space in Building 5 or something?

Paul: We used to store barrels for Corby. When I first went to Gooderham and Worts, we also had two other operations. For Dow Chemical, we had a glycol operation in which we blended glycol that we received from Dow Chemical in rail cars in a totally different division. Those large tanks at the west side of the, one of those large tanks...

Chris: The one that has "glycol" [written] on it.

Paul: Right. We would receive it in there and we would blend it in a small glycol tank and then put it in tank trucks and then ship it to bottlers of glycol throughout Canada.

Chris: Now, was that there because you actually had that facility left over from the antifreeze days?

Paul: Yes. And all the blending facilities and what have you. Before I got there someone had a contract with Dow Chemical and they would produce glycol.

Chris: And the other company?

Paul: The other company was...it wasn't another company. It was still Gooderham and Worts but we delivered all the case goods to the Ontario liquor stores from Niagara Falls all the way to Peterborough and up to North Bay. We had our own delivery trucks and we had case good storage on site. Then the LCBO [Liquor Control Board of Ontario] built their large warehouse out in Whitby and took that business away from us.

Chris: You mean you were distributing all of the Hiram Walker family...

Paul: All the Hiram Walker family...Corby, Hiram Walker, whatever, Gooderham and Worts, all the Hiram Walker products we had in inventory. We would receive it from the distilling production companies and bottling companies and store it and then put out to the Liquor Boards.

Chris: So that would have made Building 74 quite busy?

Paul: Yes. We had two trucks going every day. They were small vans. In fact, one of them is still there. They were going every day.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: When did that LCBO facility open?

Paul: Somewhere around 1987.

Chris: When it did that led to then another empty building?

Paul: Another loss in income for the site.

Chris: The next general area I was going to ask about was in terms of the recognition within the company. I guess the overall parent company about the historic significance of Gooderham and Worts. My own understanding is that there was a move in the 1970s on the part of the City of Toronto to designate and recognize the site. How did the company, itself, view the property? When you were to go there, did you know that it was this old complex? Was there some sympathy within the overall company recognizing its value? What was your perception of that non-economic, functional side of the facility?

Paul: I guess back in the 70s, again with George Wilton, the maltings required a new roof - extensive roof work - and it was going to cost about \$200,000. They did a study and, at that time, it would be cheaper to tear the building down than to re-roof it. They applied to do that, apparently and the City or the Historical Board, at that time, I think, still had to pass things past the Historical Board to get demolition permits. I not sure about that but they realized that, at that point, the significance of the site and maybe had already realized it but were not pushed to action until this happened and they started designation. In the mean time, someone in Toronto, I don't who it was, whether it was City Hall or Historic Board got a hold of Cliff Hatch because of the Hatch connection with Gooderham and Worts and complained that it was going to be destroyed. This, of course, Mr. Hatch didn't even know about. This is something that happens on a daily basis on a production operations and no corporate President knows everything that is going on. So once he learned of it, the order came down to Gooderham and Worts to repair the roof and withdraw the demolition permit and repair the roof. When the President tells you to repair the roof, withdraw the demolition permit, that's what they did. Shortly after that, it was designated as a Historic Site under the Ontario Heritage Act and from that point on it was treated differently.

Chris: So, on one side the City discovered it when a demolition permit came along and the company discovered it when the City made these observations?

Paul: Yes. There wasn't a concerted effort or callousness on the part of the company other than it was just a good business decision.

Chris: Why did so many buildings survive? If by 1974, several of the buildings were already vacant, weren't they? I guess I am thinking of things like the old mill, must of

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

have been empty, the malt house would have been empty; why didn't these come down in the 60s even?

Paul: I think it was a series of managers there. Bill West and George Wilton who were very conscious that if they spent too much money, they might be closed. They might bring too much attention to the site, so they just backed off spending any kind of money and in fact, by doing so probably preserved the jobs and the buildings and did a great service to the historical community but also to the employees. Whether that was the perceived threat on their part or not, I don't know or whether previous management from Hiram Walker had told them that; don't spend a lot of money on the site or whatever, I don't know. When I got there, Bud Downing was the President at Hiram Walker here, and realized when he started working there actually with Gooderham and Worts and then went to Corby's and then came here and I don't know whether he had a soft spot in his heart, but certainly when I got there, as far as I was concerned, it was going to be a viable operating distillery. I didn't get that impression that the money was not there to do the things. In fact, I was going to replace fermenters and they said fine do it on a 5-6 year plan and put a plan together and then, of course, the takeover took place and sales started dropping in the distilling industry and then we had to retrench that plan.

Chris: So actually, while you were there, there was a shift in perception that when you arrived the plant was to keep going. It was to be a viable distillery maybe even increase production if that was appropriate but it was the Allied Lyons takeover...

Paul: That and combined with a shift in drinking habits. I think you will find they took place in the same time frame. In the 80s, there was a drop in sales and it made companies, not just in the distilling industry, but all companies look at their property and say, all right let's maximize the production of all our properties. Studies were done and found they could do rum here at this distillery. The fact that when the Caribbean got most favoured nation status by the Canadian Government, then Caribbean rum was duty free coming into the country and we were now competing against very large distilleries that produced rum in the Caribbean that didn't have administrative labour in a department of this and everybody else requesting certain regulations from the distillers and all industry. As far as that's concerned, they are very costly items to supply and so we just couldn't compete with the cost. The landed cost of rum in Canada was less than we could produce it for. There were a good number of reasons why.

Chris: Bacardi's was the only Canadian competition?

Paul: Bacardi didn't make rum in Canada.

Chris: So they were already...

Paul: They were importing it. They were also buying it from Gooderham and Worts. Bacardi told me, when I was there, that the reason they bought it from us was that we

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

made the best rum in the world. Now it's gone. As such, the rum that we made for Bacardi was the base rum.

Chris: Which means?

Paul: Which means they blended to our base rum and it was such a neutral rum that it didn't enter in to the marriage of the blenders. It was just the carrier of the marriage of the blenders. Therefore, on its own, was a very good product for any distiller who wanted to blend rum together. Bacardi used it specifically because we were in their backyard and it was cheaper for them to bring it in, for the volumes they needed, then it was to bring it in by shipment. There were some limitations to the volume you could bring in.

Chris: Customs?

Paul: No. There are only two ships that travel the world carrying rum and Bacardi owns them. They are very busy all of the time so it was their schedule that, my understanding, limited the amount of rum that they could bring into the country, so that is why they had to produce from us. Some of those ships were destined for other distillers.

Chris: In terms of the process of rum distilling, did Gooderham and Worts have an advantage with the kind of equipment it had? I am just not familiar with what would make rum distilling better or worse.

Paul: It was the stills, specifically, but we also had a specific yeast that was designed by Gooderham and Worts for the production of rum. The yields were very high but the distillation process, per se, the stills themselves, they were Barbay [spelling uncertain] stills. They produced a very superior product. The designer of the stills came from our Peoria operation years ago and he was brilliant when it came to designing stills. It is the stills that make the difference. Those were excellent.

Chris: It was, when, in the 50s or something that you went into rum or when did molasses....

Paul: That is my understanding. The early 50s.

Chris: So that is when these stills were designed and put in.

Paul: Yes. That was the latest molasses production in history but before that we were producing alcohol from molasses during the war, I believe too.

Chris: But in terms of the equipment that is there now, that ugly green control panel and all that. That is the 50s rum [still]?

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Paul: Yes, that is the 50s panel and before that I don't what it looked like. I haven't seen any pictures of it at all.

Chris: The columns and all that were installed at that time as a rum distillery?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: Is there anything of the earlier distillery there? There is an anhydrous plant on the other side of the wall there?

Paul: Yes, that is an anhydrous operation that used benzene and that was before the 50s during the war, actually. Since benzene is now a designated substance, you could use it to make anhydrous but that still operated for a very short time. I don't believe as successfully as they had hoped. It was just shut down and left there.

Chris: This has nothing to do with the interview but I am curious. Is there a rum still down here in Windsor? Or did they convert [another still to rum production]?

Paul: No, we use the same stills we use to produce whiskey but they are very sophisticated stills and you can change their function very easily.

Chris: The other Barclay stills that are in [Buildings] 54 and 57, there again, there is nothing particularly old on that site in terms of the stills than presumably those Barclay stills were put in in the 40s, the rum stills were put in in the 50s, the anhydrous stills are probably the oldest then from the 30s. Is that it?

Paul: Yes, I would think so. You can actually see that they are older than the rum stills. They are very old. That is probably the technology that was, sort of, growing at that time and that is one of the reasons why they were unsuccessful, the anhydrous stills.

Chris: In terms of raw materials, was it always molasses when you were there? It was grain prior to that, was it not?

Paul: Yes, there is evidence with the roller mills that in fact, they did do grain. All the chutes and what have you. In fact, there is still dust in them if you move the sluice gates, don't stand under them because you will see dust. I don't think you will ever get rid of grain dust.

Chris: But there must have been employees who worked in the mill?

Paul: Yes, there were. That site had almost 200 employees at one time.

Chris: How many were there when you were?

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Paul: When I was there, I believe 38.

Chris: And was that steady during your tenure? Was it 38 right up to closure? [See Interview #2]

Paul: Four people retired and just before I got there, the last person hired was Jimmy White who is now there as maintenance staff. [See Interview #2] He was hired - that was an interesting story - by Dick Martin and Bob Morrison. Dick Martin was the Superintendent and Bob Morrison was the Assistant Superintendent at that time. [See Interview #3] They went to a trade school in Toronto and asked for someone who would like to be a pipe fitter or a machinist and so the instructor at the trade school said, "Jimmy is a very bright, young lad, take him.". We brought him in as an apprentice. We gave him time off to do his exams and he went through his apprenticeship with flying colours. The feedback we got from the school was will you take anymore because as such, Jim had such a wide variety of jobs to do that he not only learned his own skills but many, many others. You had to be a jack-of-all-trades there when you are maintenance. He came through with flying colours.

Chris: It is interesting that he is still there. What about the molasses? How did that come in? Where did you get it from?

Paul: We bought our molasses and contracted with a company in Hamilton called Canada West Indies Molasses Company. They are owned by Tate and Lyle in the U.K. which supplies, I was told at one time, about 80% of the world's sugar. They own a good portion of supply process and certainly, a great deal of molasses. It would come in ... Canada West Indies Molasses has storage tanks somewhere around New York at the end of the Oswego Erie Canal and they had a barge that they would load up and come up the Oswego Canal, across Lake Erie to Toronto, tie up at our Gooderham and Worts dock, which I understand is now property of the RCYC [Royal Canadian Yacht Club]. Then we had a pipeline that went underground to the large tank on the west of the site that says "molasses."

Chris: The outside tank?

Paul: The outside tank [in Building 9].

Chris: What about the other two tanks? In Building 8 there is a little tank..

Paul: Inside, that's also a molasses tank but that tank was heated during the winter months. There is steam coils inside the large tank outside, but molasses in the winter gets pretty stiff and so we had an inside tank that we would constantly be drawing into to maintain a warmer molasses that we could actually pump. When we needed more to fill the inside tank, we would turn the steam lines on in the large tank and draw from the warm molasses around the steam lines, but the inside tank was specifically to keep it

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

warm enough to pump the volume that would, hopefully, last for any very, very long cold snaps.

Chris: In Building 8 was the little tank inside the building, in Building 9 was the tank that came through the roof which is yet again another molasses tank?

Paul: No, the large outside one, that you see from the outside, is in fact, probably the bottom 30 feet is inside the building. So that was the other reason the tank was designed like that, but they still required steam lines on the inside because of the molasses above the roof line in the tank was cold. The molasses below was warm but not warm enough.

Chris: So all the other tanks outside to the west of that were all glycol?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: Products and byproducts? Do you remember anything about the antifreeze?

Paul: Just a small amount, actually. It only lasted about two years after I arrived there. Then it was taken away to a much larger operation because the supplier of the glycol wanted us to get into aircraft de-icing fluid and we just didn't have the tanks to do it. They wanted all their operations in one site so, I think, they took it to Linwall [spelling uncertain], a company by the name of Linwall [spelling uncertain], Toronto and they took it over at that time. That would be about 1986.

Chris: But the canning line in [Buildings] 58/59 was still there in operation when you first started?

Paul: No.

Chris: This was bulk antifreeze?

Paul: Yes, I'm sorry, tank trucks. They would receive it in rail cars, unload the rail cars into the large tanks, reduce the strength of it and colour it and put in mould inhibitors and rust inhibitors, etc. We would blend those together in another tank and then ship it out in tank truck.

Chris: In terms of the building, though, 58 and 59 have been vacant for years?

Paul: Oh yes. It was a bottling room before it was a cannery.

Chris: What about fusel oil? That always intrigues me. Is that a byproduct?

Paul: It is a byproduct of all distillation processes.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: Like a commercial byproduct?

Paul: Yes. Actually, I was there again, about three years and we used to sell it to a company in New York who would come down. We would drum it off from the fusel oil still.

End of Side One

Paul: We used to drum the fusel oil off after it was taken out of the regular molasses alcohol and drum it off and then at the bottom of the fusel oil still there was a small tank where it was collected. We would then drum it from that tank and when we got 20-30 drums of it, we would call this company from New York. They would come in with a tank truck and pump the drums into the tank truck. They used it for perfumes, fusel oil, for producing perfumes and other cosmetics. But, I found another use for it just after the ... this is where Gooderham and Worts comes into the nuclear age, Chernobyl incident. I got a call from a chap in Germany who wanted to know if we had any fusel oils. I said, "Yes, we had 50 drums of it." He said, "I'll take it." sight unseen, "I'll take it." I said, "What do you want it for?". He said that there was a company in Germany that makes zanthate than is used in gold production. It makes the ore, after it is ground up, froth. In the frothing it pulls the gold to the top and they skim off the froth and that is how they extract the gold, in certain processes. I don't if all process are like that, but they need fusel oil to produce Zanthate. I said, "Why all of a sudden do you need our fusel oil?". He said, "Well, we usually get our fusel oil from the large distillers in the Ukraine and the last load that came in was radioactive and we had to send it back. Now we are scrambling all over the world to find fusel oil and if we don't find some the price of gold is going to go crazy.". Now I don't know how much gold he produced or how much of it was true but we sold the fusel oil.

Chris: Somebody described fusel oil as pretty disgusting stuff, though. Is it sort of smelly, sticky?

Paul: Have you ever had kirsh, the drink kirsh? That's what it smelled like, but a lot stronger.

Chris: Were there any other byproducts? There was the mash slop and things like that, which are not a byproduct...

Paul: Well, the byproduct from the molasses was just the stillage that was produced from the molasses that was the result after. We just used to put it in the sewer system and treat it in the sewer system and put it in the Toronto sewer system. Now, we had a licence to do that, of course. It wasn't that offensive or volume. It was just that grain would be more of a solid byproduct where the molasses byproduct was liquid.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: OK. So were there any other commercial products like, I guess carbon dioxide is given off but wasn't gathered, is that it?

Paul: At one time, I guess when we were producing from grain, there was a fair amount of carbon dioxide and there was a building called the gas house that was between the office building, the lower building between the office building and the malt building and that is now offices. In fact, the conference room was part of the gas house and they would pipe the carbon dioxide from the top of the fermenters to there and then out to, where the parking lot is now, a company called Liquid Carbonic. When Liquid Carbonic moved, probably after we stopped producing by grain, we didn't produce enough CO₂ for them anymore. They had to move and somehow, they are producing it some other way now.

Chris: Was there any relationship with Windsor in terms of bringing in something to finish in Toronto or conversely taking any of the products from Toronto and finishing them in Windsor? It seems to me that you were saying that in terms of the rum, that was sold out of the company.

Paul: Yes, we sold rum, of course to Bacardi. We made it for our own production as well and we would age it first in barrels and then we would drain the barrels and ship trucks of it to Corbyville where Corby would do all of our rum bottling. Now Corby is closed down and the rum is produced here and bottled here.

Chris: What about the antifreeze? That wasn't produced by any of the Hiram Walker family?

Paul: No. No, not at all. The antifreeze was produced by Dow Chemical.

Chris: Again, from a production process point of view, the Toronto operation was self contained; it didn't rely on any other of the production facilities within the Hiram Walker family for raw materials or semi-finished products and it didn't ship semi-finished products to be finished elsewhere within the Hiram Walker family?

Paul: Well, yes it did because Corby was within the Hiram Walker group. Semi-finished rum would be blended and bottled at the Corby building.

Chris: What about in terms of transportation? How important were the rail lines while you were there? You mentioned tank cars loads of...

Paul: We also shipped rum out to our British Columbia distiller by rail and they bottled rum for the western part of Canada and the western United States. We received alcohol, sometimes from commercial alcohols in Montreal, which was industrial alcohol on a separate line to the industrial or pure spirits building. We then, also received glycol by rail, exclusively.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: So that siding was used right up until the end?

Paul: I think the last time we used it, it was probably January, 1990.

Chris: It is always good to hear that rail is still being used but on the other hand, I suspect that the tanker trucks were the more important mode or the more continuous mode of travel.

Paul: Yes, they were.

Chris: In terms of the physical plant, how do you feel about its condition? After you realized in the mid 80's that things were going to close, was there less incentive to keep it up or was it maintained in peak condition up until the end?

Paul: I think we did. Of course I was the only one who knew it was going to close for about 2 years. For the safety of the employees and the quality of the product, it had to be maintained right to the end.

Chris: So it was always maintained as a fully operational plant?

Paul: Absolutely. I don't think you can do anything half way in industry when you have a feeling that you want to do the best and you just do until the last drop is produced.

Chris: I guess there is also food and health standards?

Paul: There are government regulations that you still have to uphold until the last employee walks out the gate.

Chris: What was the capacity during your tenure there of production capacity?

Paul: I think we could produce somewhere around 8-10 million litres of alcohol of rum spirit.

Chris: What did you produce?

Paul: We were producing about five in the last year.

Chris: When you first came there, you were producing at capacity?

Paul: No, I think the capacity was probably 8 but we were producing somewhere in the 5-6 level all the time.

Chris: What about the industrial side; ... of the flow of industrial alcohols through the plant?

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Paul: That was pretty constant. The industrial customers are varied and many and we drummed it off; we sold it in 500 ml bottles, to tank truck loads, in 210 litre drums, and 25 litre cans, and 5 litre cans.

Chris: Would employees move back and forth between the two lines depending on the season? I understand there was some seasonal variation?

Paul: We used to bring some overload employees when we had to do some barrel drains and we needed five or six more employees. We would bring them in from an overload company. Most of the employees were trained in all areas of the distillery. Our worst time was when we were running around the clock in the distillery and had to use our still operators and our fermenter house operators and that took our regular employees to do it and we had to bring in overload people to do some of the other things. But, any one employee could do any job in the place.

Chris: Was that a policy or just because they were there, they learned.

Paul: I think it was necessity. We would do drains in the morning and industrial alcohol in the afternoon. We had two truck drivers or three truck drivers and three trucks doing case goods and one doing industrial alcohol. It was just a matter of going from one job to another and another, all day long.

Chris: Actually, it sounds like it would have been much more interesting.

Paul: I think it was. I think that is one of the reasons we had such long term people there. I think the youngest person in seniority was Jimmy White with 6-7 years. But after that seniority, I think the next one was something like 18 years and then it went up to 25 years and then Bob Morrison had 41 years. So long service people were there and they enjoyed working there. In fact, when we closed, one of the guys, Pete Nicholson said he didn't know if his car could go any other place.

Chris: What about the decision to close the plant? You mentioned that it was a secret for two years from employees?

Paul: I don't know that it was a secret from the employees for two years. When we lost the glycol operation and we lost the case goods operation and effectively, we only had the industrial alcohol operation and the rum production, there were meetings and you could read the writing on the wall. I think the final decision was made, probably, six months before the actually closing. But, prior to that, no matter what we tried to do, it just didn't seem viable anymore to keep that plant running. Plus, we got involved in the development of the site and any number of people were telling us we couldn't operate a distillery in the middle of retail and commercial and residential properties and that sort of

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

driving we existed to the site. So once it was decided to go with the development, then the distillery was somewhat domed.

Chris: Why did the Hiram Walker sales staff move out then? It completely closed down. Could they have stayed?

Paul: That was the rationalization that so many companies were doing in this age. They were all let go. They did not move, they were all let go. Our sister distillery, Corby's sales force took over all Corby and our market products. We took over all of Corby production so it was sort of a tit for tat operation. We'll take over your sales and marketing, you take over our production.

Chris: Now Corby's is just a vacant lot, isn't it?

Paul: Yes, and this distillery [at Walkerville] is operating 80+% of its capacity. Which in modern days, is the way to operate. It's just economics.

[Note: The Corby plant was closed about 1990-92 but some buildings were still standing in 1994; the still house had been demolished in the early 1980s]

Chris: It's the state of the economy.

Paul: The way of the world.

Chris: You mentioned, in terms of the equipment, that it was well suited for rum production so presumably, the plant had a useful niche in that way. Is there a down side as well that Gooderham and Worts faced, that made the equipment, the plant or whatever seem more difficult to use? Did that ever factor into any of the decisions about operating the place? What were the opportunities of the site and the constraints of the site from a production point of view?

Paul: I think from a production point of view, the site could create more income as a development property than it could as an industrial property. Specifically, it was designed as a distillery and most of the buildings were purpose built for that purpose and to change them to any other purpose would have been very costly and just not financially viable, especially when you have other plants that are running at 50% of production and are much more efficient than you are.

But, as it operated, as Gooderham and Worts operated on its own entity, it was a very efficient operation and a very flexible one because we could do a variety of things. There were pipelines all over that place. We could go from one tank to any other one tank. A modern distillery tends to have circuitry where gin is in one circuit, rum is in another circuit, something else is in another circuit and never the twain shall meet. We were flexible enough that we could use tanks for multiple purpose products in the beverage

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

business or multiple purpose products in the industrial alcohol business. Those two systems were separated totally, but that was the only separation that existed. But, as a flexible plant and an accurate plant for operation and numbers and things like that, it was extremely well looked after and well managed.

One example: when we ship a product from one distiller to another, simply because of the pumping and the movement of the product because it is a volatile product, you lose about 1% of the product. Excise understands that so they allow you 1% loss on pumping and shipment. If you have a loss of more than that you pay the duty for it unless you can explain to them where it went. If there was a leak and an obvious loss of the product and it wasn't siphoned off for portability somewhere else and you could prove that to them, then you didn't have to pay the duty. What the distillers did was they went back Excise and said, "All right, when we have a 3% loss, we shouldn't have to pay for 3% loss because you are already allowing us 1% so we should only have to pay for the 2% loss.". Excise were discussing this question. The chief Excise duty in Toronto was in this meeting and stood up for Gooderham and Worts and these 10 loads that we sent to British Columbia were all within 1-2 tenths of a litre of each other in volume. One Excise officer from another region questioned that accuracy because he had never seen it before. The retort from the Chief of Excise from Toronto was, "Have you ever seen Gooderham and Worts?". He said, "No". He said, "You would know if you had that they can do it and they are probably the only ones in Canada that can do it." The reason, of course was, we used to weigh the alcohol and send it by weight. It was always the same strength, 96.5% of our stills and we maintained that strength religiously. When we put it in the tank scales, the scales that now exist in the pure spirits building up on the second floor, we would put it in those scales and load from those scales to a tank truck.

We would set the scales and they are very accurate scales, so that when we have withdrawn the amount we want from the scale, it starts to tip, the operator can reach over it, arms length and close the valve. In a modern distillery, the operator reads a digital read out, supplied to him from maybe 100-200 feet away. He pushes a button on a valve that is probably another 100-200 feet from the tank and the pump. You never get the accuracy that you get on a closure of a valve arms length to that tank truck. The scale tank was never moved. We pumped the product in and the weights on the scale were kept the same for all ten loads. So we knew that all ten loads were the same. But in the modern day distillery, you can't do that.

Chris: Which makes it a bit of a joke in a way, because they probably have metering that is probably accurate to 1/10th or 1/100th of a litre.

Paul: You would think so, but none that are approved by Excise. There are many industries that use meters in line meters but none that are approved by Excise. It is difficult, apparently, to calibrate them.

Chris: So it works for internal use but not for Excise duty?

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Paul: Yes, but not for Excise duty purposes. At that time, that was my understanding. I understand now there are in-line meters that Excise has approved but at that time there were none. Of course, this distillery and this whole process was put in place before electronics were even known.

Chris: What you are saying that is kind of interesting then, is that the Gooderham and Worts plant could be rebuilt, updated, modernized and was from the 1860s right up until 1957, but in today's market it couldn't and wouldn't have gone through another modernization no matter how good the alcohol industry was today? It couldn't have justified a brand new rum still or whatever?

Paul: I don't know if you can say no matter how good. What is the art of the possible? Certainly, if the volumes were there, then it would pay more to keep it there. It would be able to realize more profits if the volumes were there. It possibly could, but certainly with the industry the way it is now, it certainly is not going to happen.

Chris: Why did the scale tanks in Building 60 survive in such pristine condition when all the other ones seemed to get painted over with aluminum paint? But the "Fairbanks" [lettering] is on it, the wood work is there. Those three tanks almost stand out on that property.

Paul: Scale tanks, as such, are special animals no matter where they are. They, first of all, cost a lot more than a standard tank. They have to be calibrated by Weights and Measures yearly, at one time, and now, I believe, it is every two years. The scalemen were usually the blenders. They were highly qualified people and had pride in their jobs. I am not saying that the other employees didn't have pride in their jobs, but these were instruments of accuracy and so they had to be kept clean of any dust or anything that was on the mechanism that would have resulted in different weights. They had to be kept lubricated and what-have-you. They were, in fact, in a very confined room where there was no other operation going on. The larger tanks in the distillery and in pure spirits had a variety of other operations going on beside barrelling and trucking and things like that. They didn't, I don't think, survived as well as the scale tanks because of the areas they were in.

Chris: The use and the area? What about the weigh master?..

Paul: The blender, actually.

Chris: Were these long term employees?

Paul: Usually. Blending, even here, has the long service employees. It is an area that requires a little bit of knowledge of other areas besides your own, although you have to build that knowledge from working in those other areas but it is also an area where you don't really get too dirty and you have a great deal of responsibility. You are putting a

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

blend together that is very, very costly in the assets. You have to be very precise. I think the older employee and the more skilled employee and one that is more caring usually winds up in blending.

Chris: Are any of the blenders still alive or retired?

Paul: Yes, they are all retired now.

Chris: I guess because of the significance now that those weigh tanks have, it might be interesting to talk to one of them. Does that sound like a good idea?

Paul: Sure, Pete Nicholson was the Supervisor in that area. He is in Toronto, and retired, owns horses and having a good time, I'm told. [See Interview #4]

Chris: In terms of the closure, again, how was the closure announced to the employees?

Paul: George Chandler, the Vice-President of Production for Canadian Operations, my boss at the time, called all of the employees into the office, the new office where there used to be the stable and one morning in April or May of 1990 and told them that the plant was going to close on August 31. After that, we didn't do any work that day, as you can imagine. Some of the people were shocked, some of the people were not. Some of the people who had been around since 1957 when grained stopped being produced and they thought they were going to close then and they started doing rum and things still didn't seem to be all that viable. They thought that at any time the axe was going to fall. So, from 1957 to 1990 they lived under that threat. For some of them, it actually came as pretty tough.

Chris: It wasn't a function of how long they were there, it was just the surprise of it actually closing?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: The architect has talked about "Farewell Court." What is the significance of that?

Paul: Well we had our last party there, the day of closing.

Chris: In August, outdoors, in that area?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: Because Roger [du Toit; architect for the redevelopment] was saying the employees asked that that area be called "Farewell Court?"

Paul: Yes.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: So there was some sense of tradition or significance given to it.

Paul: Well, it was the last time they were all together.

Chris: I just noticed this note here about the Excise people and it has always struck me as being one of the more tedious jobs, I could imagine. Was it?

Paul: Well, at one time, I was told there was almost 50 excise officers at that site. At one time, we could not move whiskey unless they unlocked the tank, unlocked the valves. Every valve had a lock on it. Every pump had a lock on it. Buildings had locks on them. They just didn't really trust us at all, I'll tell you. Every time we moved product from one tank to another, there was an Excise officer in the crew or two; one at the receiving point, one at the shipping point and then five or six more recording all the data.

Chris: This was even when you started there?

Paul: No, Excise had gone to a post audit system and the Excise officers were provided with an office. They were there, probably, two hours per day and they were auditing books that we prepared on the same profile as was done before. In fact, that is how we do it now; all distillers in Canada.

Chris: When did that change?

Paul: Early 80's. 1981 or 1982.

Chris: So just before you came to Gooderham and Worts?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: I still think it must have been one of the most indescribably dull jobs. You wouldn't be producing anything, you wouldn't be...

Paul: It is like any other. There was a cross-section of the general public in the Excise division as well. Some officers were very sticklers on, "you are going to do it my way and that is all there is to it". Some of them, it was a power trip for them. Others were very cooperative and very helpful. Within their ranks, they had problems because some people would feel that this was necessary and others felt that they were watching the King's or Queen's alcohol. I think some of that thinking still exists. No matter what the distilling industry does to be good corporate citizens, stay within the law and do all the things we are supposed to do, we are still looked at as though we are bad actors. How many times have you seen a newspaper article calling it a Sin Tax?

Chris: Why was so much stuff painted with aluminum paint? It seems to me, you must have got a good price on it.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Paul: I was just going say, its cheaper than black paint or cheaper than some other paint. At one time, I suppose, Dick Martin once told me, the reason they did it was because it supplemented the lighting.

Chris: So this went way back before you were there?

Paul: Oh, yes.

Chris: It is almost like a corporate colour.

Paul: They got a good deal on G&W green and aluminum.

Chris: What about the movie business? When did that develop? After closure?

Paul: No, we were doing movies, probably one a month. I think, Nash MacEwe [spelling uncertain] was involved with the industrial committees at City Hall and part of his job was Movie Coordinator in the City and he dealt with a lot of the movie houses and Gooderham and Worts was just a natural site for it because the movie houses could come in and work on weekends and after hours and it was completely fenced in. They didn't have the public bothering them and keep getting in their way or require the Toronto Police Department to reroute traffic during rush hour.

Chris: So it was used, again, throughout your tenure. There were always movies?

Paul: Yes, always movies or advertisements.

Chris: They used the outside. I mean, now it seems with the closure, they are using the inside as sets, and things like that. Was it primarily an outdoor set?

Paul: It was primarily outdoor sets. "Three Men and a Baby" was the first time, during my tenure, that we allowed anybody inside.

Chris: When was that?

Paul: 19...? Go see the movie. Look at the credits because I'm not sure. Somewhere around 1986, 1987. We were very tough with the movie houses. We wanted them to put bonds down. They could not smoke on the property at all. Our electrician had to check all of their wiring before they started. They had to hire our maintenance people, all the time they were there. Any work that had to be done, maintenance wise, were done by our people. We didn't want any of the mechanics or electricians of the plant changed so they had to hire all of these people during the shoot. So, our maintenance guys got a lot of overtime.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: So, it was a natural extension after closure? The movie business just picked up.

Paul: Yes.

Chris: What about the privacy of the property? The closure of Trinity Street? It has always been a private place, hasn't it?

Paul: As I understood it, Trinity Street closed during the first World War when it became a war plant producing acetone. They put the fence around it. Actually, it was patrolled from inside by armed guards and what have you. The story goes, and I heard this from O.D. Johnston and some things I have read about, that during the first World War, the British were losing the battle and so they did a survey of the front line officers and asked, "What's the problem?". They said, "Well, we can't spit at them, we need ammunition.". At the time, production of cordite required acetone. Acetone was being produced by all the British distillers as much as they could produce but it was not enough. So, the Gooderhams, being expatriate Brits, were approached by the British government because G & W, at that time, was the largest distillery in the world, and the Gooderhams turned over the production plant to acetone entirely and didn't charge them. They changed the name to British Acetones and very shortly after that, tank car after tank car - there are some pictures of rail lines of tank cars outside the property - were going to Britain. I am not sure where I got this information, maybe Stephen [Otto, historian] or Mike Filey told me, but there was a change in the fighting during that period of time. There was sort of a lull in the fighting and apparently the British Secret Service let out information on purpose to say something like there was going to be a big push months from now. So, the Germans stopped the offensive to prepare for this big push and it was really created so they could get more acetone in Britain, to delay, to get the ammunition back up again. Maybe it was a turn, who knows.

Chris: Gooderham and Worts played its little role.

Paul: Maybe its a major role and that's maybe why there are so many "Sirs" in Britain instead of "Vons".

Chris: Or that there is a Queen and not a Kaiser. Paul, that really was the list of questions I had. I could have asked you about stories about the plant but I'm not sure if the employees themselves wouldn't be a better...

Paul: Pete Nicholson is the guy you want to get a hold of.

Chris: Is there anybody else you think I should talk to.

Paul: Maybe Bob Morrison. I can give you his number and he can maybe give you Pete's number. Bob has kept in closer touch with him than I have. Obviously because he is in town. [See Interviews #3 and #4]

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: Thank you very much.
End of Tape