



*Windmill, ca. 1832*

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### **The Distillery District: a shot of history**

Recognized as a national historic site, Toronto's Distillery District contains over 30 Victorian buildings that document the nation's architectural and industrial heritage. Between the 1830s and 1890s, the firm of Gooderham & Worts grew from a small windmill in the wilderness to the largest distillery in the British Empire and, for a time, in the world. The twentieth century brought war, prohibition, globalization, decline, and rebirth as a vibrant arts and cultural district.

In 1832, brothers-in-laws James Worts and William Gooderham built a 70-foot brick windmill on the edge of the bay. Worts brought twenty years experience as a miller in England, while Gooderham contributed most of the capital. After the untimely death of Worts in 1834, Gooderham continued on alone. Steam soon replaced unpredictable wind power. In 1837, Gooderham added a distillery to the mill. Both businesses prospered. In 1845, Worts' son, James Gooderham Worts, became a full partner, followed a few years later by Gooderham's son, George. The 1850s brought railways, boom times, and dramatic expansion.

Begun in 1859, the Stone Mill & Distillery was opened in 1861. Designed by architect and engineer David Roberts Sr., the massive new building was constructed of Kingston limestone, served by a new spur line of the Grand Trunk Railway, and increased production capacity from 80,000 gallons of whiskey per year to over 2 million. The Stone Distillery is now the oldest and still the largest building on the site. Other new buildings followed. Roberts' redbrick cooperage and maltings complex opened along the west side of Trinity Street in 1863. Then, on October 26, 1869, near disaster. Fire destroyed much of the wooden interior of the Stone Distillery, but spared most of the machinery. Frantic reconstruction got the building back up-and-running by spring 1870.

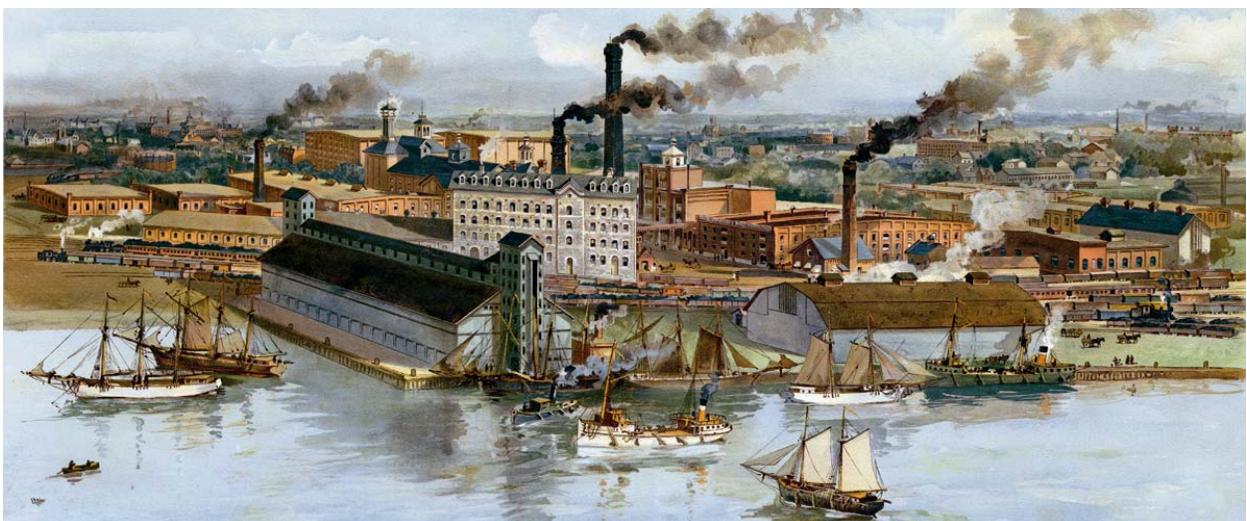
The east side of Trinity Street began to be developed in the 1870s. In 1873, the Pure Spirits Complex of rectifying stills and storage space replaced cattle sheds that had been removed to the far side of the Don River in 1866. These buildings are notable for their expanse of wood and glass, which would blow-out and save the structures if a still exploded. George Gooderham took over the business after the death of his father in 1881 and his uncle in 1882.

Changes in legislation and taste marked the next period of development. Beginning in 1885, government required alcohol to be aged for two years to protect the health of consumers. Meanwhile popular demand grew for the finer aged products. So more storage space was required. Between 1884 and 1891, tank and barrel rack houses were built along Mill and Cherry Streets, with 6-storey Rack House D at Mill and Trinity being the largest. All were designed by Roberts Jr. In 1895, the final Victorian building, the Fire Pump House, was constructed at the south end of Trinity Street.

Dramatic change came with the Great War and subsequent passage of prohibition legislation in 1916. That year, the Gooderhams placed their distillery at the disposal of the British Government, free of charge, to produce acetone and ketone, vital components in the making of explosives. When prohibition was not immediately lifted after the war, the Gooderhams decided to sell the business to Harry C. Hatch. Four years later, in 1927, Hatch and his associates acquired Hiram Walker's Sons, creating Hiram Walker-Gooderham & Worts., and built the Case Goods Warehouse to store cases of liquor.

When Canadian, but not American, prohibition was ended, Hiram Walker's Windsor plant got most of the company's business. Gradually, production at the Toronto distillery was cut back. The last whiskey was made in 1957. Then the antifreeze lines were phased out to facilitate the production of rum from molasses. Rum and industrial alcohols became the plant's main, and final, products. In 1987, Hiram Walker-Gooderham & Worts was acquired by Allied Vintners and three years later, on June 4, 1990, the last alcohol flowed from Gooderham & Worts. 158 years of industrial activity on the site was ended.

The future of the magnificent, but abandoned, industrial site was in serious doubt. A raft of heritage reports were commissioned. Various proposals were made. In 2001, the current owners decided to redevelop the site as an arts and cultural centre, while retaining and adaptively reusing the Victorian industrial fabric....with the results you see all around you,



*Gooderham & Worts, ca. 1896*

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