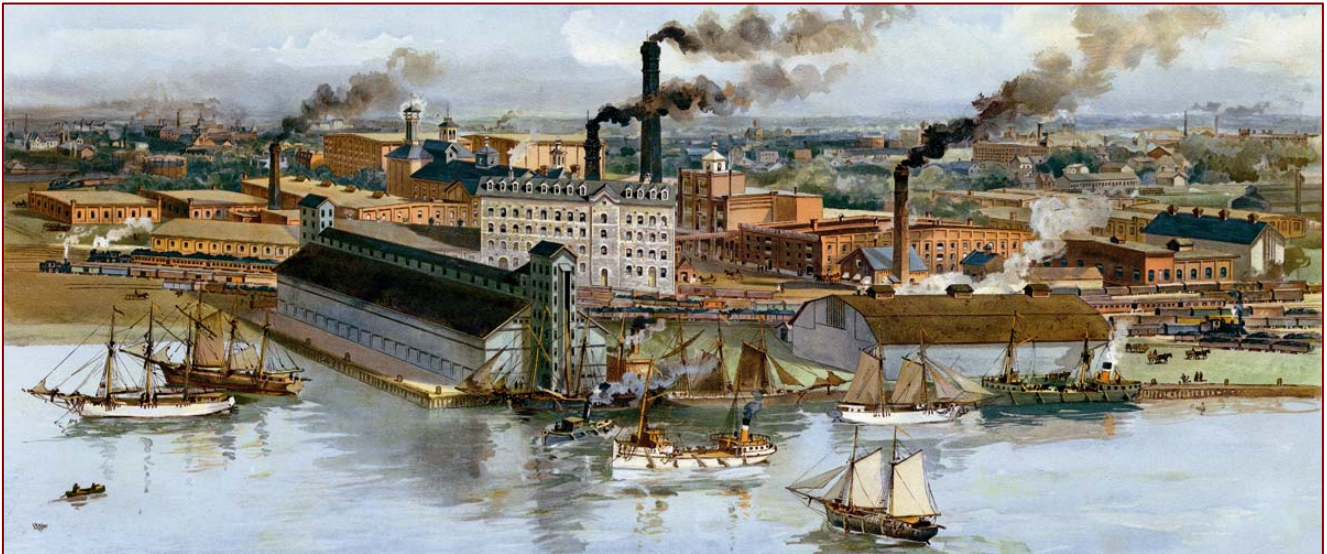


Heritage Chimneys



Smoking chimneys, 1896: signs of “progress” at Gooderham & Worts and elsewhere in Toronto

Toronto’s Victorian skyline was punctuated by church steeples and industrial chimneys. As the nineteenth century moved along, the industrial chimneys with their plumes of smoke came to dominate the skyline and its artistic renditions. Church architecture, of course, has received considerable attention. Industrial architecture considerably less. It’s time to redress the balance a bit by paying attention to these venerable Victorian smokestacks, especially since so few of them have survived into the twenty-first century. Two of the largest and oldest are in the Distillery District.

Over the years, Gooderham & Worts built a number of impressive chimneys. The first was probably the chimney built for the company’s 1833 steam engine located in a boiler house to the west of [the windmill](#). The oldest *surviving* chimney at the Distillery District was designed by [David Roberts, Sr.](#) to serve the boiler house on the north side of his 1861 Stone Distillery. This chimney has undoubtedly been repaired and reconstructed many times over the last 150 years, using different types of bricks and diverse brickwork. But the basic pattern was established by the 150-foot original depicted in the an 1863 issue of *Canadian Illustrated News*. Although the castellated top of the stack has disappeared, the elongated, arched panels set into each side remain, testifying to the “art” created within the industrial fabric.



David Roberts, Sr.

By 2006 the Stone Distillery chimney was in need of major repair. It would either have to be taken down permanently (as the Pump House Chimney had been in the 1930s) or rebuilt. As discussed in an [earlier article](#), a decision was made to take it down, rebuild it to a slightly lower height, and cap it with lead-coated copper to prevent future deterioration. With that (expensive) gesture, the Distillery District's, and Toronto's oldest remaining industrial chimney was saved from oblivion.



High-level consultations atop the 1860 chimney, January 2007

The Distillery District's other surviving heritage chimney is currently encircled by aluminum scaffolding while a team of masons stabilizes it. Designed by [David Roberts, Jr.](#) and built in 1886, the East Boiler House chimney was once one of the largest in the city. Over the years, a sizeable portion of this chimney has fallen down or been deliberately removed. The June 1894 photograph, taken from the west, provides an unusual and helpful angle, showing the relative size of both the original Stone Distillery chimney on the right (when it was about 150 feet tall) and the East Boiler House chimney on the left (when it was perhaps 200 feet tall).



**East Boiler House and Stone Distillery chimneys CTA 376-1-66
Photographer F W Micklethwaite shot this view looking east along The Esplanade
from the Elias Rogers chimney on June 27, 1894**



Repairing industrial chimneys is not for the feint of heart. The first task is to determine the extent of the damage, which can't be done simply by standing on the ground or pointing a telephoto lens. Close inspection of the top, the interior, and the full length is required. So in cold and dreary December 2007, a Distillery District mason and restoration architect donned safety gear, stepped into the bucket of a crane, and were hoisted 140 feet in the air. They poked at loose mortar, checked for cracks, and reported back that the damage wasn't as serious as feared. The chimney could be stabilized, rather than taken down and rebuilt.



Going up



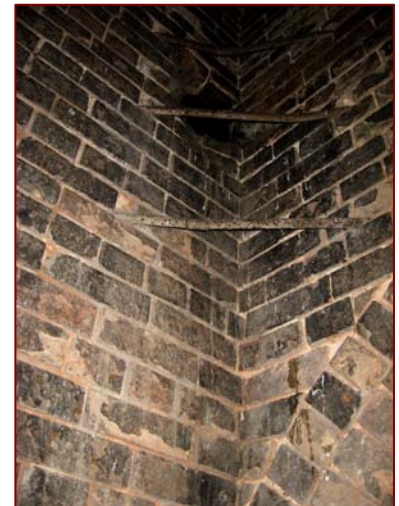
Peering down

Based on this inspection, as well as close study of the chimney base, a plan was devised, a scaffold raised, and repair work begun. Between St. Patrick's Day and Victoria Day, badly spalled and cracked brickwork will be replaced with about 2500 reclaimed bricks; the badly weathered, east and west sides of the chimney will be entirely repointed; the north and south sides will be repointed as necessary; and a lead-coated copper roof will be installed to prevent future damage

According to the experts, the base is in astonishingly good condition. The walls are 54-inches thick, constructed of highly fired buff bricks bound together by red mortar. Just why the builders used red mortar is a mystery, since there was no industrial need for it. (Maybe the builders or the owners simply preferred the look of red mortar.) Access to the base was provided by round-headed openings on the north, south, and east sides. And access to the entire interior of the chimney was provided by iron rungs (see both the top picture looking down and the base of the chimney looking up). The chimney was probably built up from both the inside (using the rungs) and from the outside (using a wooden scaffold). Given the heavy industrial use of the chimney, the surviving brick is in astonishingly good condition.



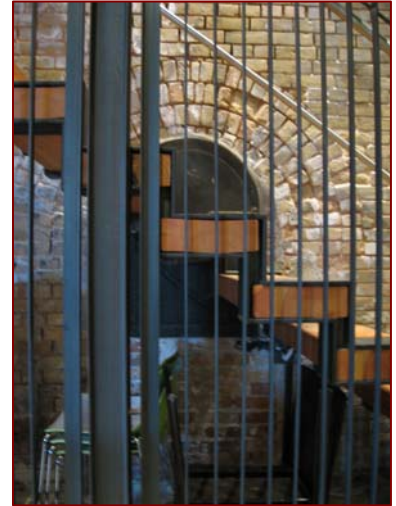
Modern scaffold



1886 interior rungs



Still, even experts aren't perfect. "They made a mistake," mason Paul Goldsmith commented, slapping the brick wall just where there were two rows of bricks that were laid directly on top of one another, rather than in an alternating pattern. Why? The original bricklayers probably realized that if they hadn't made a slight adjustment, the two sides of the arch would not have met properly at the top. It takes an expert to catch an expert, and explain the reasons for diverting from usual practice.



Bricklaying "mistake"

East chimney door today

When Victorians looked at industrial chimneys belching forth smoke, they thought of "progress." When we look at photographs and nineteenth-century paintings of these chimneys, we think of "pollution" and "global warming." Whatever the symbolism, however, these great industrial artifacts were significant structures in their day and deserve our recognition. Most have already disappeared from the Toronto landscape. Be sure to take a moment to inspect and admire the two that still remain at the Distillery District.

Other heritage chimneys in Toronto include [Todmorden Mills](#) and [Don Valley Brick Works](#).

The photograph looking down the chimney was taken by architect Andrew Pruss of ERA. Many thanks to both Andrew and mason Paul Goldsmith of Historic Restoration for pointing out significant details.

Please send your comments or questions to Manager of Heritage Services, Sally Gibson, sg@thedistillerydistrict.com.

For more about the history of the Distillery District, visit www.distilleryheritage.com