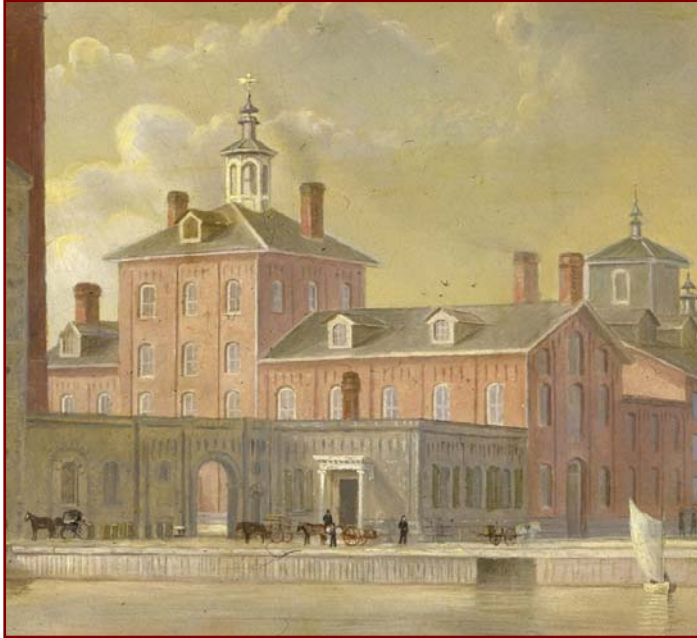


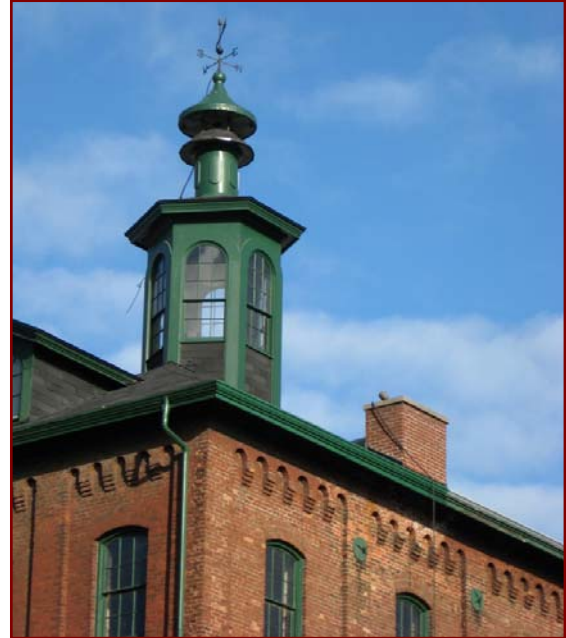
Building Histories

Rectifying House & Cooperage Group

Buildings 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34



Rectifying House and nearby buildings, 1870 DHD



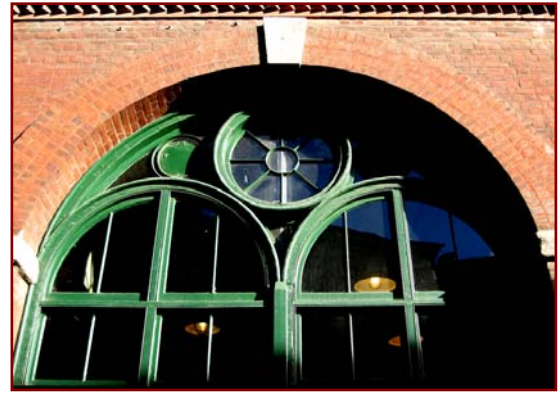
Rectifying House cupola, tie plates and decorative brickwork today

The four-storey Rectifying House was the southern anchor to [David Roberts, Sr.](#)'s mid-1860s expansion to the Gooderham and Worts distillery. This group of buildings, now known as the Cooperage Group, ultimately comprised six buildings (Buildings 27, 28, 31, 32, 33 and 34) that served different purposes over their working lives. Their original uses were rectifying (Building 32 and 33), cooperage (Building 28) and offices (Building 31). After the completion of the [Stone Distillery](#) in 1861, G&W's capacity catapulted to two million gallons of whisky per year. The company obviously decided that it needed more rectifying capacity to purify the whisky, dramatically improved [barrel-making facilities](#) to hold the alcohol, and better office space to manage the growing business.

Probably constructed immediately after The Maltings (Buildings 35 and 36), the Cooperage Group completed the western side of Trinity Street between the Stone Distillery and Mill Street, and formed the north side of what is now known as [Distillery Lane](#). The style is quintessential Roberts, Sr.: utilitarian with touches of elegance. Red-brick boxes of varying heights are composed of recessed panels and piers and set on limestone foundations that tie the disparate buildings together. An open "cooper's yard" (later building 34) was even fronted by a brick facade to maintain a harmonious and uninterrupted street line along Trinity.

Decorative touches enliven the facades, treat the eye, and knit the buildings together. Note especially the ornamental brickwork of arcaded corbelling surmounted by a sawtooth pattern that traces the rooflines up, down and around the buildings. Note

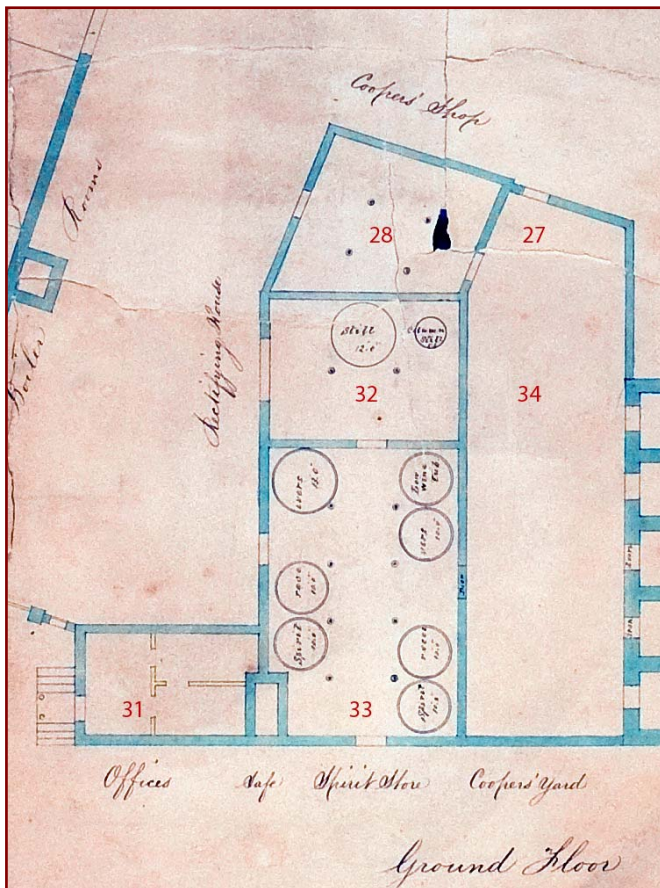
also the unexpectedly grand arched entrance to the four-storey Rectifying House that is both functional (lighting dark, interior spaces) and elegant (with a relatively unchanged upper portion composed of two glazed wooden arches supporting a circular “oculi”). A print by [Timperlake](#) in 1877 provides the earliest view of this façade and suggests that the elaborate doorway was a later addition, perhaps when the space was devoted entirely to offices. Either way, it is now one of the Distillery District’s distinctive architectural features. The height of Roberts’ decorative embellishment is the hexagonal wood-and-glass cupola set atop the Rectifying Tower that originally contained a vent for distilling fumes.



Top portion of entrance to Building 32

This group of six buildings has a complex history, since they were physically, but not always functionally linked and their uses varied over time as the distillery expanded and technology changed. Three plans help untangle the different building configurations that occurred between the 1860s and 1880s. Many later changes occurred, but these were the formative ones. Building numbers have been added to the plans to aid comparisons among the plans and between then and now.

The first plan of the Cooperage Group dates from the mid-1860s and captures the original conception of the buildings. The dominant use, and tallest building, was the Rectifying House. Later designated Building 32, this structure contained a single distilling column that rose from the ground to the fourth floor in the northwest corner.



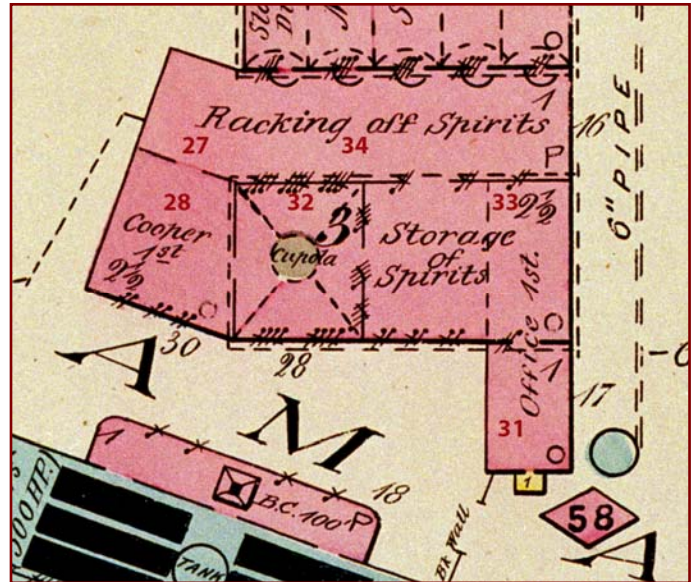
Related equipment, such as spirit receivers to gather whisky and a “worm” to cool and condense the alcohol vapour, were spread throughout both the four-storey Building 32 and the adjacent three-storey Building 33.

The second and third floors of Building 33 contained space for “spirit store.” The third floor also contained “barrel storage,” which perhaps explains why there’s a lift beam in the Trinity-Street gable of that building. Barrels, empty and full, would have had to be lifted up to the third floor. Although few other details are given, the plan clearly indicates that a “Cooper’s Shop” was located at the west end of the group (Building 28), “Offices” were located in a one-storey building at Trinity Street (Building 31), and a “Cooper’s Yard” surrounded by flanking walls was located

**Rectifying House and nearby buildings
ca. 1865 (building numbers added) CTA/DHD**

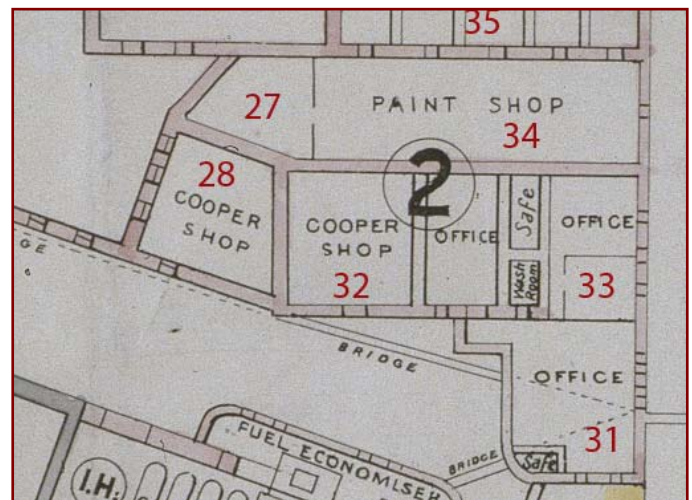
to the north in what is now Building 34. A “Safe” was located between Buildings 31 and 33, probably a secure, barrel-vaulted space. In the 1860s, entrance to the office building was through a decorative portico and access to the five barrel storage vaults under Building 35 was from the Cooper’s Yard.

The second plan of the Cooperage Group appeared in the 1880 *Goad’s Atlas*. At that time, the Rectifying House was still in use, producing more refined whisky. The “Cooper’s Yard” had been converted into a one-storey building for “Racking off Spirits” from the rectifying still in Building 32 (probably into barrels for storage in nearby buildings and basement barrel vaults). The one-storey offices in Building 31 had expanded into the first floor of adjacent Building 33, reflecting the continued expansion of business into the largest distillery in the world by 1877. Upper floors of Building 33 continued to be used to store spirits. The Cooper remained at the west end of the group on the first floor of Building 28. And Building 27 had still not been created out of Building 34.



**Rectifying House and nearby buildings in 1880
Goad, Plate 11 (building numbers added) CTA**

The third plan dates from about 1889 when the Cooperage Group buildings had been reconfigured. The major change was removal of rectifying from Building 32. In fact, this had occurred by August 1882 when an agreement signed by George Gooderham to incorporate Gooderham & Worts indicated that the “Old Rectifying House” no longer contained a column still. A second major change involved Building 31, which had become the base for a two-stage pipe bridge from the Stone Distillery to the Pure Spirits complex across Trinity Street where rectifying had been relocated. Building 31 had been widened, and its southwest corner rounded. The rounded corner accommodated one of two barrel-vaulted locations designated for office safes. (The other was in Building 33.) Both these vaulted spaces can still be seen, as can the rounded exterior wall. By 1889, the old Cooper Shop had expanded into Building 32; Office space had expanded further into Building 32; a Paint Shop occupied Building 34; and the portico on the south end of Building 31 was gone.



Rectifying House and nearby buildings, ca. 1889 DHD

During the First World War, Gooderham & Worts was converted into British Acetones to produce a key ingredient of smokeless gunpowder. By this time, industrial activities like distilling, repair, and alcohol storage had been moved to other parts of the site. Building 34 was a lunch room (look for the faded signs that still mark the

walls today). Buildings 31, 32, and 33 were primarily office spaces. Two photographs taken in 1918 document the south façade of the Cooperage Group. An [exterior shot](#) depicts the poster-decorated grand entrance to Building 32 that was flanked by two relatively new windows. An [interior shot](#) of the same building indicates that the Time Office was located on the ground floor. War workers were reminded to buy Victory Bonds and to “ring” their time as they passed by the booth.



**Wartime at Gooderham & Worts;
Victory Bond Posters greeted workers entering the Time Office in Building 32
CTA 1583-143 and 144**

The Cooperage Group underwent a variety of changes during the rest of its distillery life. When the 1892 [Gooderham Building](#) at Wellington and Front was sold in 1949, head office moved into newly renovated offices in Buildings 31, 32, and 33. The entrance was into Building 33 from Trinity Street was made more important by mounting a large decorative glass panel bearing a G&W coat-of-arms over the door. (The glass panel has been removed for safe-keeping, but its location is still visible.) Around the same time, part of Building 32 was transformed into an impressive meeting room known as the Cooper’s Room, where master-carpenter Jack Bentley’s hand-crafted [corner cabinet](#) and paneling were featured along with modern stained glass. Most of the paneling is gone, but Bentley’s cabinet and some stained glass are still featured in the second-floor library of Voice Intermediate School.

As you wander around the Cooperage Group buildings – both inside and out – be sure to notice the features that have survived beautifully (such as the decorative cupola and brickwork, sturdy barrel vaults, and characteristic [construction techniques](#)) and remember the workers who laboured as coopers, distillers, barrel-handlers, and office personnel during 125 years of active distillery life.



Building 32: school library cabinet, column & double timber beams



**Building 31 & 33: looking west
Glass sculpture & industrial chic**



**Building 31: Barrel Vault
1880s "Safe" today**

The mid-1860s plan reproduced here is from a set of plans showing each of the floors. This enables modern researchers to determine how space was configured throughout the buildings. These plans show the Stone Distillery and Maltings, as well as the Rectifying House and Cooperage.

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

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