

Building Histories

Buildings 35 & 36: The Maltings

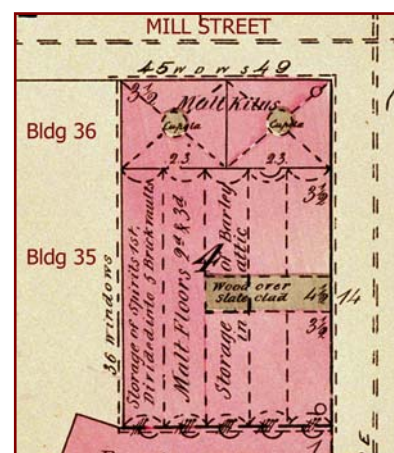


Gooderham & Worts letterhead featuring new malting operation, 1868

TPL

Malt was the magic ingredient Victorian distillers used to convert starchy grain into a sugary liquid that could be fermented and distilled into whisky. When William Gooderham started his distillery in 1837, he probably bought malt from local brewers and distillers. Before long, according to [E. B. Shuttleworth](#), Gooderham was ordering barley and probably making his own malt. Where this was done is unknown. But after the [Stone Distillery](#) opened in January 1861, the company's production capacity increased dramatically and the need for malt increased along with it. It was time to build a major malting operation on site.

[David Roberts, Sr.](#), who had designed and overseen the construction of the Stone Distillery, immediately started drawing up plans for the next major expansion of the distillery, which included a Malt House (Building 35) and an associated Kiln Building (Building 36) on the west side of Trinity Street, just south of Mill Street. Together, these buildings would act as a factory to create malt from barley. Goad's 1880 plan provides details about the relationship of the two buildings. The extensive Malt House (Building 35) occupied most of the site and contained "malt floors" above a series of five [fire proof vaults](#) for storing alcohol. (Goad shows two malting floors, but other sources clearly indicate that there were three.) The Kiln Building contained two three-storey kilns capped by ventilator cupolas located directly above basement furnaces that were separated from the alcohol-storage vaults by a solid wall. The buildings were linked by doors on the second floor.

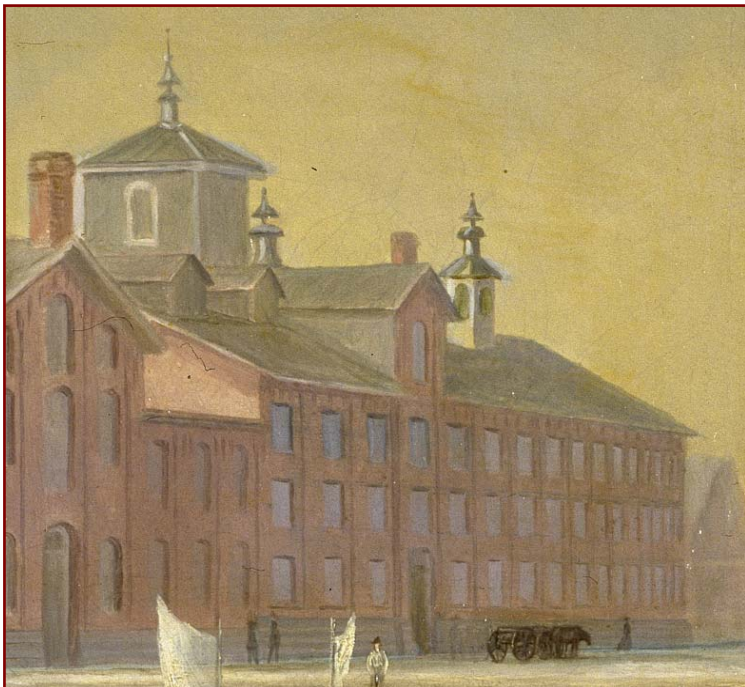


Malt House & Kilns, 1880
(labels added) CTA

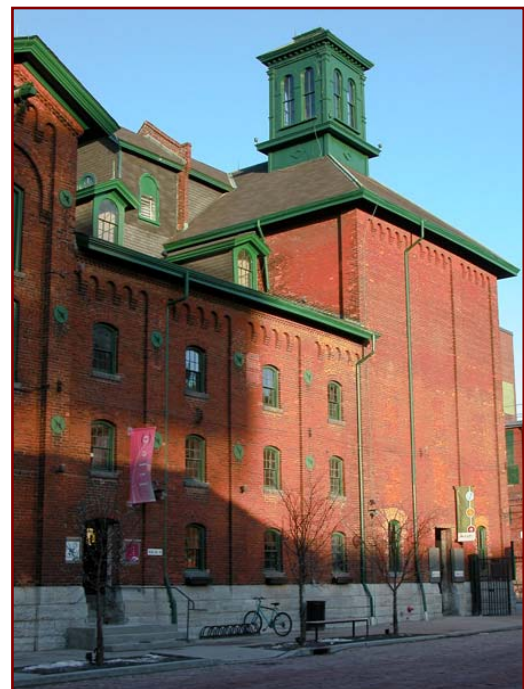
The barley arrived at Gooderham & Worts via ship or railway, was carted over to the Malt House, hauled up to the attic granary for storage, using a winch and the wooden hoist beam still visible in the gable of the four-storey dormer (see photos). As needed, the barley grain was fed through chutes to the low-ceilinged malt floors below. Here it was spread out, watered, raked, and turned over until it sprouted to just the right size. This “green malt” was then transferred to the adjacent Kiln Building. There, two furnaces in the basement heated the sprouted barley in the kilns above until it was dried and converted into malt. The malt was then hauled back to the Stone Distillery where it was put to work creating fermentable sugary liquid.

The importance of the new malting operation – not to mention the evident pride of the owners – was reflected in the company’s letterhead from the late 1860s that featured a colourful and detailed image of the new buildings and described Gooderham & Worts as “maltsters,” as well as millers and distillers. The letterhead appeared in at least two colours: barley beige and (surprising, but not shocking) pink.

David Roberts, Sr.’s design for the new buildings on the west side of Trinity Street was quite different from his earlier work, notably because all the mid-1860s buildings were of red brick rather than grey limestone. Certain features were continued, such as the [tie-plate construction](#) and double timber beams resting on [projecting corbels](#). The new red-brick buildings, however, were composed of projecting piers and recessed panels surmounted by decorative brickwork – such as arcaded corbelling. Despite their very different functions, the original Buildings 35 and 36 appeared like a single structure. The brickwork, limestone foundation, continuous rows of evenly spaced windows, and similar height tied the two buildings together and contributed to a particularly harmonious streetscape. They also set the basic pattern for many later distillery buildings designed by Roberts’ son, [David Roberts, Jr.](#)



Three-storey Malt House & Kiln Building, 1870 *DHD*



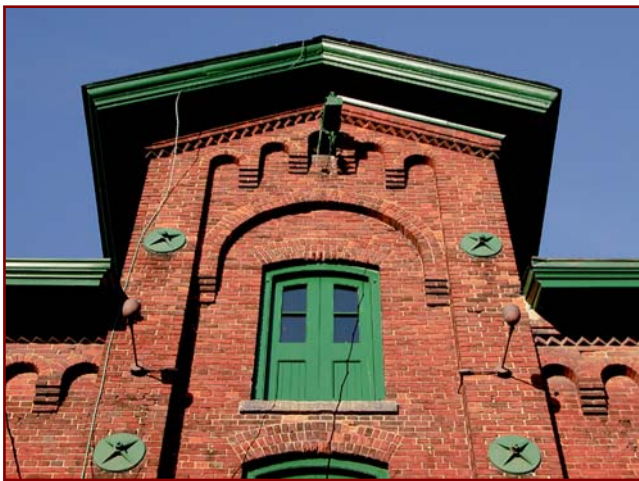
Malt House & Kiln Building today

Originally, both the Malt House and the Kiln Building were three storeys high. Building 35 had an extensive fourth-floor attic with a gabled dormer door, and Building 36 had two ventilators piercing the sky above the kilns. While the exterior

of Building 35 has remained relatively unchanged, Building 36 has been greatly altered. The interiors of both buildings have changed extensively over time.

Between 1880 and 1884, the three-storey Kiln Building was raised to its current height of four-and-a-half storeys, with windows and doors being blocked-in on both the Mill Street and Trinity Street facades. (Recently some of these former windows have been reopened.) All these changes are clearly evident on the exterior of the building, so be sure to take a look.

Meanwhile, only one of the two cupolas has survived. The taller, western one was removed in the mid-twentieth century. The more decoratively pleasing lantern has survived. (Whether it was ever used in a malting process remains a mystery.) In Scotland, the “kiln pagoda” is symbolic of whisky-making, even in distilleries that never made their own malt. Perhaps Gooderham & Worts’ kiln cupola has survived for symbolic, as well as architectural reasons.



Malt House lift beam above attic door



Kiln furnace (south half) *by Pete Paterson*

It was probably around this time – early 1880s - that the decoratively functional brick furnace still in the basement of Building 36 was installed under the western kiln. (No evidence remains of an eastern furnace or kiln.) The double-arched Victorian furnace contains two, double-ended iron fireboxes that were manufactured in Chicago by pioneering brewery architect and engineer, Fred W. Chicago. Apparently the furnace worked by heating the mass of air in the basement rather than piping heated air through ducts to the kilns above. The numerous openings around the brickwork would have allowed for considerable air circulation ... but working conditions in the basement would have been hot as Hades.

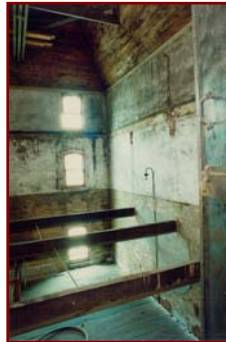
Just when Gooderham & Worts stopped making its own malt remains unknown. But by the time of the First World War, when G&W had been transformed into a war industry, [British Acetones](#), the Malt House was being used for “**Bran Storage.**” and the Kiln Building was not mentioned. Malting was, clearly, no longer done on site.

Thereafter, it appears, the buildings were used for storage and offices. For example, the Malt House was used for barrel storage (including brandy storage according to one former employee); and the Kiln Building was used for general storage and as an engineering office. As the distillery business wound down, increasing sections of the buildings remained empty.

Photographer Larry Turner documented the distillery around 1986. Almost all of Building 35 was empty, including the attic granary that had once been full of barley. Today, the dramatic wood trussing is showcased in the new offices filling the space. The west kiln in Building 36 (the only one to survive at all) was also completely empty and its perforated metal floors long removed. Today a new floor has been inserted over the steel beams, but traces of another removed floor are still evident on the walls. Other floors stored office furniture and general goods, while the engineer's office occupied an upper floor ... and displayed photographs of the Stone Distillery and Maltings on the wall. Distillery workers through the years have expressed deep affection for their workplace.



Building 35, empty attic



West kiln



Building 36, engineer's office

Both heritage buildings have undergone major interior changes in the course of being adapted for modern uses. For example, the 1863 Malt House originally contained three, low-ceilinged malting floors where barley was sprouted. Few adults (Victorian or modern) could stand up straight to do their work in such a space. Clearly, major alterations were required to accommodate contemporary uses. As a result, an entire floor was removed. This opened-up a cramped structure with five and six-foot ceilings into a dramatic, modern retail space. The original, short timber columns were replaced with soaring columns of Douglas fir, the most common wood used on the Victorian site; and the same construction techniques and original iron hardware were used to attach the new columns to the old ceiling beams. Be sure to take a close look at all these features.



Photographer Thane Lucas

documented removing an entire malting floor from Building 35

Meanwhile, Building 36 has undergone a variety of changes to accommodate new businesses, including laying a new floor made of fir recycled from 100-year old rack house timbers and inserting six "new" windows based on original designs into previously bricked over windows to shed natural light on new uses. Sometimes everything old is new again.

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.

To unsubscribe from this newsletter, contact sg@thedistillerydistrict.com