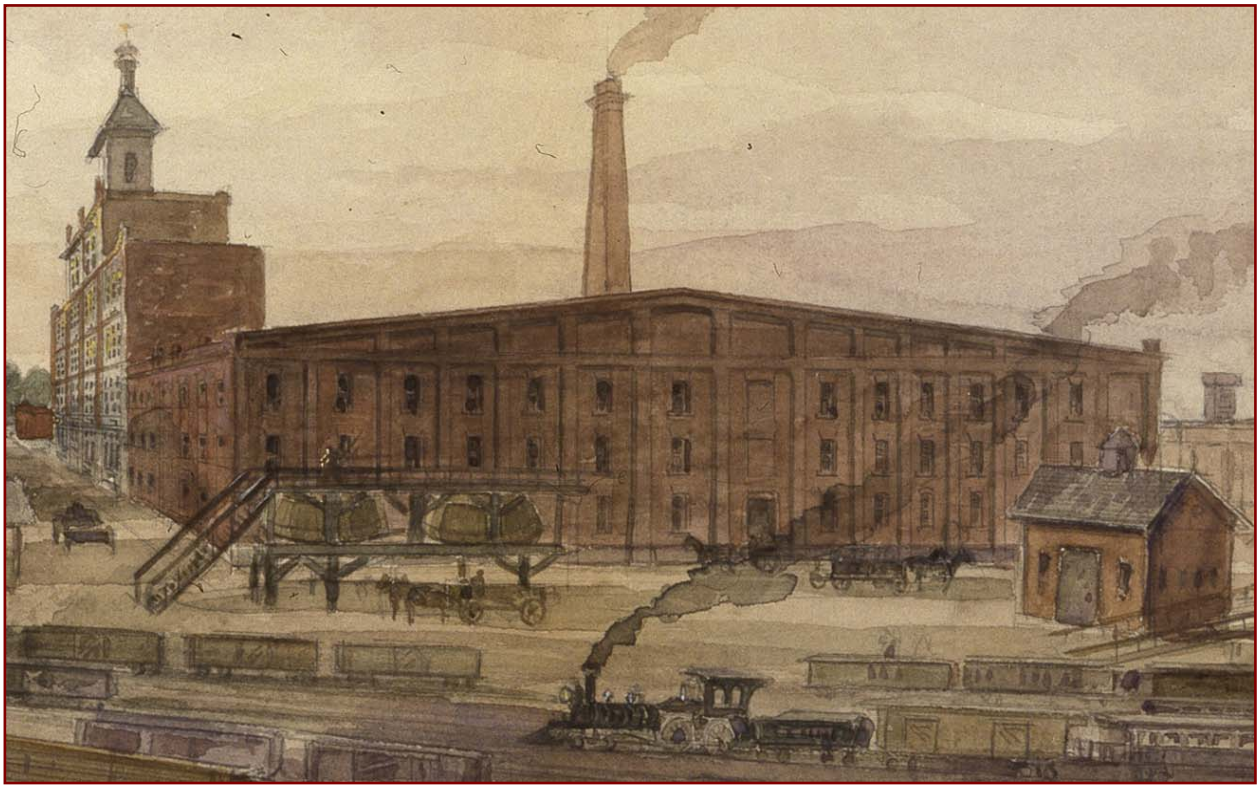
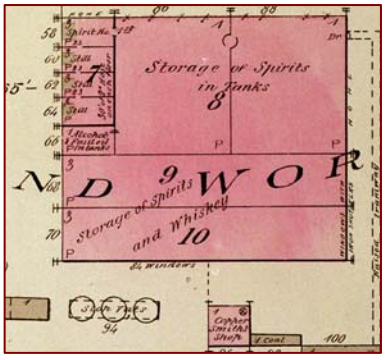
Building Histories
Buildings 58 & 59: storing, bottling, canning



Buildings 58 & 59 in 1884 before Pump House (1895) and Case Goods Warehouse (1927) *DHD*

Now known as the Cannery, Buildings 58 and 59 were constructed around 1873 as a single unit devoted to storage of "spirits" (such as gin) and "whiskey," as Charles Goad spelled the beverage on his first map of the site. The spirits were probably distilled next door at the Pure Spirits complex that was built at the same time; and the whisky was distilled across Trinity Street in the Stone Distillery. During their industrial working lives, Buildings 58 and 59 were used for storing, bottling, and canning various products in various combinations.

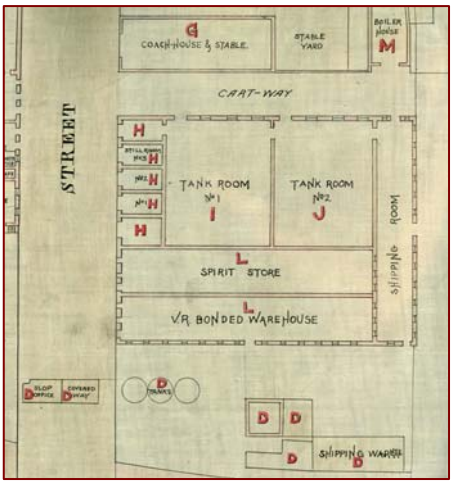
Probably designed by David Roberts, Jr., the Cannery buildings originally faced the lake and had an uninterrupted view of the water, because neither the 1895 Pump House (Building 60) nor the 1927 Case Goods Warehouse (Building 74) had been built. They also rose only three storeys and featured a gently pitched, rather than a flat roof. Very different from today's four-storey, flat-roofed, completely encircled buildings. The buildings' red-brick, panel-and-pier masonry and limestone base are, however, familiar. They continue the basic style adopted by Roberts, Sr. across Trinity Street and by Roberts, Jr. in later rack and tank houses found around the site.



Goad: storage in 1880 *CTA*

From the outset, the two buildings completed the east side of Trinity Street and eventually defined the north side of the roadway now known as Case Goods Lane. In 1884, as shown in the painting by W. D. Blatchly, the buildings also overlooked railway tracks and trains, a strange construction that contained "slop" to be sold as food for livestock, and a cooper's shop for manufacturing pipes, tanks, and other distillery equipment.

In 1882, the northern "Spirit House" (later Building 58) contained twelve oak "receivers," each with a capacity of 5000 gallons and protected by a copper cover; and the southern "VR [*Victoria Regina*] Bonded Warehouse" (later Building 59) contained seven oak "receivers," also with individual capacities of 5000 gallons, but covered by wooden tops. The Victorian bonded warehouse probably had to have room for an excise officer to keep track of all transactions and ensure proper payment of taxes. (These buildings are labeled "L" on the accompanying 1882 plan.)



1882 Spirit & Bonded Warehouse

The history of bottling at Gooderham & Worts is extremely sketchy, in part because almost no equipment and few traces of that activity survived into the late 20th century when heritage studies were conducted. In 1883, the federal government passed a "Bottling in Bond" law that started the practice of affixing a dated strip across the top of bottles to guarantee the age of the whisky. Within a very short time, most distillers, probably including Gooderham & Worts, had started bottling their own products in bond. The earliest known G&W bottle dates from 1884, which fits this pattern.

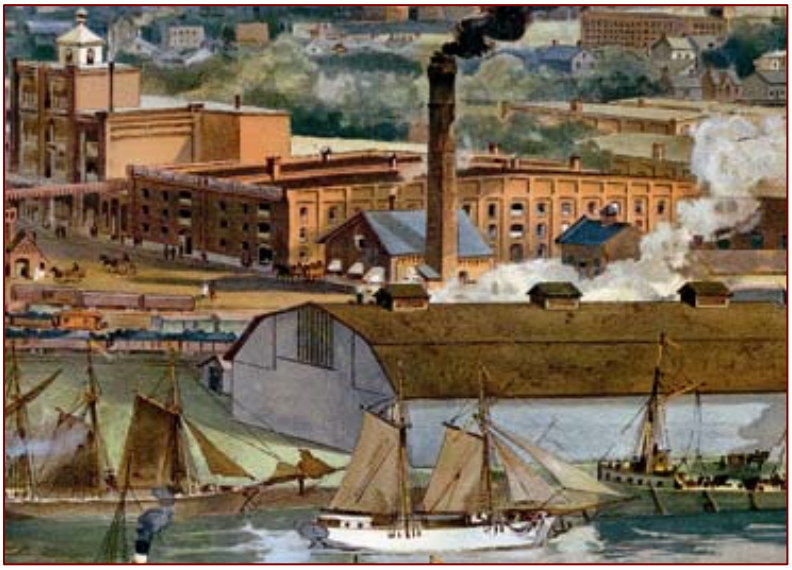
Unfortunately, no details of the earliest efforts have been found. Given later history, however, it seems highly likely that bottling operations were centred in Buildings 58 and 59 and that these buildings were reconfigured in the early part of the twentieth century when the third floor was rebuilt, larger windows were installed, the pitched roof was replaced with a flat roof, and a partial fourth floor was added to provide space for three large scale tanks.

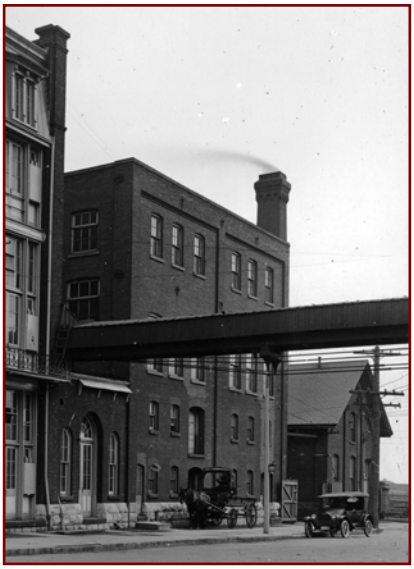
In fact, the reconstruction probably occurred between 1910 and 1918, because 13-year-old Norman Hardy started working in the earlier, lower building in 1910. A biography read in honour of Norman's "50 years of faithful service 1910-1960" provides a rare peek into early days at G&W:

> At the age of 13, Norm began working for Gooderham & Worts in the bottling room putting government stamps on pasted boards. At that time, he was paid $2.50 per week. The bottling room staff consisted of all male help when Norm first started and he mentioned that all the bottles were imported from Germany. The bottling room building at that time was only 2 [actually three] stories high, but 2 floors [actually one] have since been added.

> The bottling in those days was a slow and tedious job. After aging, the spirits would be dumped, blended and reduced to bottling strength; put back in the barrels; and rolled to the bottling room. The whisky was run from the barrels to the siphon.

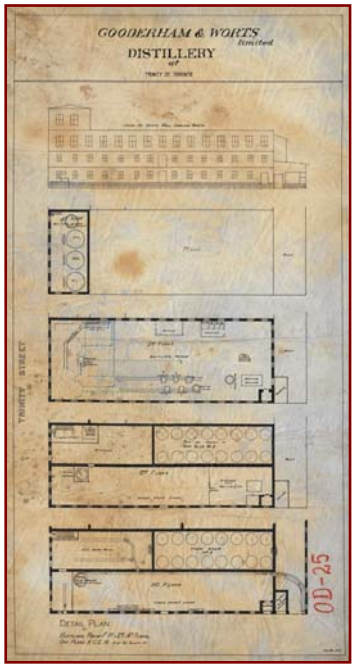
Aged whisky was very high proof so it was cut to an enjoyably drinkable 40-proof by being mixed with distilled water before being bottled. This probably happened in Building 61 or 62 just to the north of the bottling building.





Between 1896 (left) and 1918 (right) the 3rd floor was rebuilt and a partial 4th floor added

The most complete picture of bottling operations comes from the transition period when the Gooderham family sold the distillery to Harry C. Hatch in late 1923. The following February, an exceptionally detailed monetary assessment of all property was compiled, listing everything from cuspidors to column stills. In March of 1924, a detailed floor plan and south elevation of these buildings was also prepared. From these two documents, it's clear that the "Bottling and Bond House" operated as a complex unit for aging, bottling, and storing spirits.

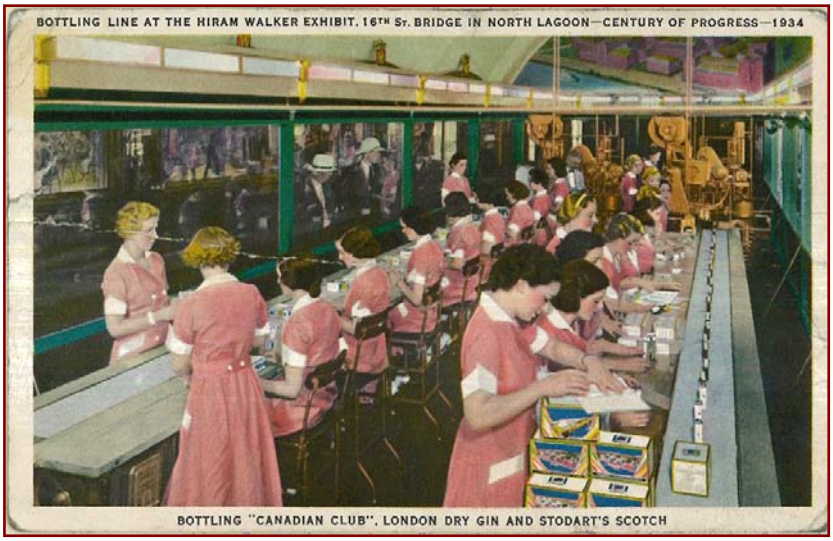


Buildings 58 & 59, March 1924
NB #58 is north of (above) #59

The first two floors were devoted to storage. Building 58 was designed as *Tank Room No. 8*, with sixteen, eight-foot tall oak tanks occupying the eastern half and poking through to the second floor. No evidence of this early use remains in the building. Building 59 was designated the "Cased Spirit Store" where bottled alcohol was stored in cases on both the first and second floors. This function was later transferred to Building 74.

The third floor of the buildings, with much higher, 14-foot ceilings and bigger windows, was a single open Bottling Room where bottles were washed, filled,

corked, labelled, crated, and sent downstairs via a system of gravity-operated conveyors and spiral chutes. A supervisor's office was located in the centre of the north wall. The bottling operation was fed by alcohol weighed and mixed in three Fairbanks scale tanks located on the 4th floor at the front (west) of the buildings. Little of the early bottling operation has survived, apart from the basic fabric of the building and two spiral chutes that have been moved to slightly different locations.



Hiram-Walker bottlers at Chicago World's Fair, 1934 *DHD* **G&W employees, Building 59, 1934**

Some aspects of bottling, like labelling and packing, were (sometimes) deemed to be "women's work." For example, when Hiram-Walker sent a bottling display to the 1933-34 World's Fair in Chicago, pink-uniformed female workers were shown labelling and monitoring bottles … and a celebratory postcard from the "Century of Progress" fair captured the activity for posterity. Since Hiram Walker and Gooderham & Worts had been merged by Harry Hatch in 1927, G&W may have shared industrial practices with HW. The uniformed women posing for an unknown photographer at a third-floor-window of Building 59 in 1934 were perhaps also involved in bottling, under the supervision of the fedora-hatted male supervisor, who is smiling with his charges in the window.

By the mid-1930s, industrial alcohol was big business – most especially anti-freeze in the new era of the "motor car." "Hot Shot" was G&W's own brand, but other brands were mixed and canned, along with other industrial alcohol products in the Cannery. Gooderham & Worts' *Alcohol in Industry*, published in 1938, described the new operations:

Can, *DHD*

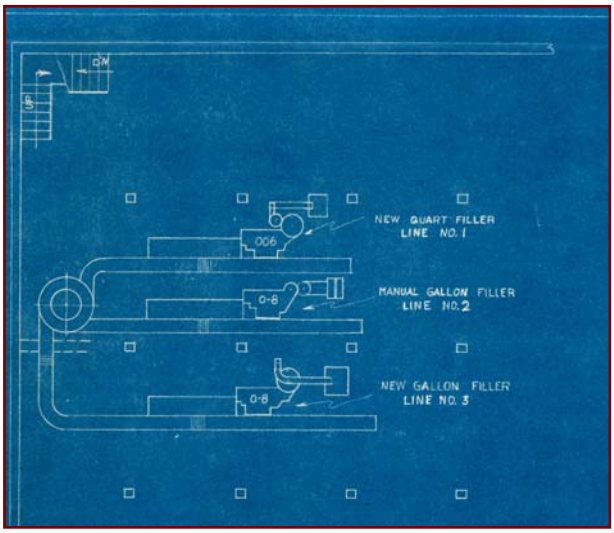
> The growing demand for "Hot Shot" made it desirable to change from the older manner of shipment in steel drums only, to more up-to-date merchandising methods. Sealed gallon and quart cans of "Hot Shot" were introduced and have proven to be the most popular method of distribution.
>
> The introduction of merchandising Anti-freeze in sealed cans was, at first, novel and few dealers were interested but as the demand

for “Hot Shot” grew, the slogan, “sealed at the refinery for your protection,” became more and more appreciated by motorists.

The Anti-freeze canning department now occupies an entire building. Early in the summer the two canning machines are put into service and before the first cold weather arrives warehouses are stocked in the principal cities from coats to coast.

By this time, the Case Goods Warehouse was in full operation and connected to the third-floor canning room by a pedestrian bridge for transferring cased goods. The cases could then be stored or sent out directly via train or truck.

The Cannery in operation, 1937-38 *DHD*



Post-World War II expansion, 1947 *D-62 DHD/CTA*

After World War II, the third-floor cannery was reconfigured to include three canning lines that remained active, in one form or another, until the early 1970s. Canning was particularly active during the summer months so the product could be in the stores by winter. All available staff plus summer students would be put to work in Buildings 58 and 59. Canning could be a hot, messy, arduous, and occasionally high-spirited process. Future plant manager Peter Nicholson started in the Cannery during the summer of 1954 and recalled those early days with a certain delight:

I started out like everybody else in the cannery….Well, at that time nobody wanted to work in the cannery because it was very tedious and you were always moving. You have to keep up with a machine and the older buildings being what they were weren’t sort of set up for the entire operation….

It was smelly. It was noisy because, you know how the cans are rolling around on the machine and you usually had two lines going at once and being young guys, horsing around, whistling and playing jokes on everybody.

There was a fellow who used to put the empty cans on the machine, then you went from empty can to packing, then from

packing to gluing, and if you weren't working on the line, you were downstairs taking them off and piling them on the floor, moving them a couple of days later.

Guys would be there with the glue brush and they would glue you up a bit, rather than the cases. One year we got a bad bunch of fellows … not bad but full of beans these guys. They didn't particularly care for their Shift Foreman, so one of them somehow got a hold of his keys and dropped it in one of the cans and the can was sealed. They found the keys eventually.

Later, smaller canning firms popped up – sometimes in garages – paid low wages, and made G&W uncompetitive. So in the early 1970s canning was shut down, according to long-time employee, Bob Morrison, who sold any saleable equipment and left the rest in place. Thereafter, Buildings 58 and 59 were used for storage or not used at all. Larry Turner's photographs from around 1986 capture this period of inactivity and show the buildings as they appeared when they were about to be adaptively recycled for post-industrial uses.

Building 59 1st floor looking toward Trinity St.

Building 58 2nd floor storage & old conveyor

Building 58 & 59 3rd canning floor

Building 58 & 59 4th floor tank loft

Turners' photographs also reveal the original interior construction and final configuration of the Cannery buildings. They show, for example, that the first two floors of Buildings 58 and 59 were long, narrow, open spaces, separated from one another by brick fire walls. Red-and-silver-painted iron columns held up the double timber beams resting on projecting brick-and-stone corbels that

supported the very low first and second floor ceiling ceilings. The long south facade of Building 59 contained rows of segmental-headed, two-over-two-pane, wood-framed windows, while the north walls of both buildings were blank.

By contrast, the third floor of the Cannery was twice as wide (embracing both buildings), about twice as high (14-feet), with square wooden posts supporting the single timber ceiling beams. It was also far better lit, with large, square-headed, eight-over-eight-pane, wood-framed windows on all four sides. The 20-foot-wide fourth floor contained a Fairbanks scale tank and two large mixing tanks on raised platforms. Brick walls on all floors were painted silver.

Transforming the old Cannery buildings into modern gallery, retail, office, and restaurant spaces presented huge challenges. The ground floor was only 7-feet high. The third floor was deliberately sloped to allow spilled fluids to drain away. The narrow, first two floors were separated by brick fire walls. And so on. Thane Lucas's photographs document both the challenges and the dramatic results that occurred between December 2002 and May 2003.

Cannery wood floor removed *Thane Lucas*

New floor & sand-blasted walls *Thane Lucas*

Perhaps the most dramatic change was lowering the entire ground floor about two-and-a-half feet. The original wood floor sat on a series of parallel limestone-rubble foundation walls. The floor was removed, each foundation wall was carefully lowered, rubble was removed, and a new concrete floor was constructed on the lowered foundations. The iron columns holding up the second floor beams were left standing on their original stone foundations. The results can be seen and admired today. Be sure to note the islands of stone under the columns that show clearly how far the floor was lowered.

Reconfiguring entrance *Thane Lucas*

Other changes included sand-blasting the exposed brick walls without erasing stencilled signs painted on some walls; removing the slope in the third floor so that dancers could enjoy a safe landing on a level floor; and creating a two-storey entrance lobby off Case Goods Lane where artifacts such as an 1890s Burnham simplex pump and a portable barrel scale can now be displayed. As

you wander around the site and through the buildings, be sure to look for the ghost signs, iron columns, exposed brick, double timber beams, brick corbels, Victorian artifacts, and other telling details that continue to celebrate the buildings' industrial heritage.

Sign, Building 58

Cannery today
Exterior view

Column, Building 59

Many thanks to Art Jahns of Walkerville for sharing information about the 1883 Bottling in Bond law.

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

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