

for Nov. 18, 2007

Taking Flight



Detail from an aerial photograph taken in November 1926 AO

*P*robably shot from an open cock-pit on November 17, 1926, this early aerial photograph of Gooderham & Worts captures both the company and the eastern Toronto waterfront at key moments in their history. It also heralded an important new technology: accurate aerial surveying.

From the perspective of Gooderham & Worts, 1926 was a year of transition. In 1923, the Gooderham family had decided to exit from the distilling business and sold the company to Harry C Hatch for \$1,500,000. Some sources suggest that the Gooderhams found the post-War alcohol business too distasteful during prohibition in Canada and the U.S. Certainly, prohibition dampened profits and lowered their expectations.

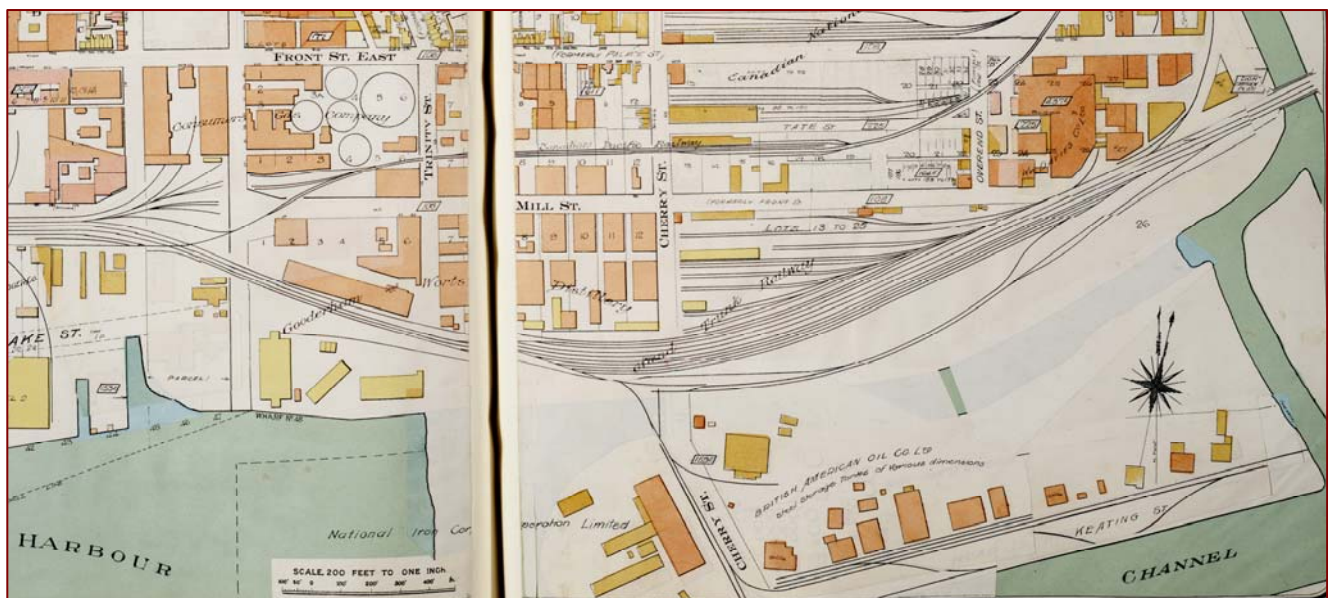
Mr. Hatch, by contrast, seemed to thrive during that rough-and-tumble period. Hatch also correctly predicted the imminent end of Ontario prohibition, which came in 1926, the very year he added another old Canadian whisky firm, Hiram Walker, to his distilling empire. By this time, the purchase of a distillery cost much more: some \$14,000,000. Hiram Walker was strategically located in Windsor, on the river directly across from thirsty Detroit. Then in 1927, Hatch created Hiram Walker-Gooderham & Worts Ltd., and expanded the Toronto site by adding two major buildings: the Case Goods Warehouse (Building 74) and 8-storey Rack House M (Building 75). His distilling business literally took off and Hatch ultimately joined the business and sporting elite of Toronto. By the time of his death in 1942, Hatch laid claim to “one of the greatest fortunes in Ontario,” Hatch horses had won five King’s Plates; and

articles about his death appeared on the news, business, and sports pages of local newspapers.

The aerial photographer who clicked three successive glass plate negatives of Toronto's waterfront in November 1926 documented the enormous changes taking place following the Great War that had stalled implementation of the 1912 Toronto Harbour Commission plan. In [1910](#), the Don River and channel still flowed along the southern edge of G&W and adjoining railway properties. By 1926, much more land had been created, which would soon leave the old G&W site land-locked and Ashbridge's Bay transformed into a port-industrial area. G&W then built a new lakefront facility, linked by pipe to the distillery.

Aerial photography developed during the Great War and really took off during the postwar period when the technology started being used for non-military purposes, such as aerial surveying and map-making. American Sherman Fairchild was the pioneer in the field, developing first a suitable camera and then suitable aircraft. In 1922, Fairfield Aerial Surveys of Canada was formed to cover the growing operations in this country. Located in Grand Mère, Quebec, the company soon discovered the unsuitability of open cockpits and unheated biplanes in Canada.

Fairfield's first specially designed monoplane, with enclosed and heated cockpit, went into commercial production in 1927. Whether the Toronto pictures of 1926 were taken from the comfort of a prototype Fairfield plane or from the older open cockpit isn't known. But it was probably the latter... and the pilot would have been in sore need of a shot of Gooderham & Worts legal-in-Ontario whisky when he landed.



1923 Goad's map shows post-War infilling south of G&W and west of the Don River TPL

The historic aerial photograph is a detail from one of three prints stamped November 17, 1926, and now at the Archives of Ontario in F 1125-6-0-20. The prints were made from glass negatives.

The quotation about Hatch's wealth comes from "Sportsman, Industrialist Harry Hatch Dies at 63," *Globe & Mail*, May 9, 1942.

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