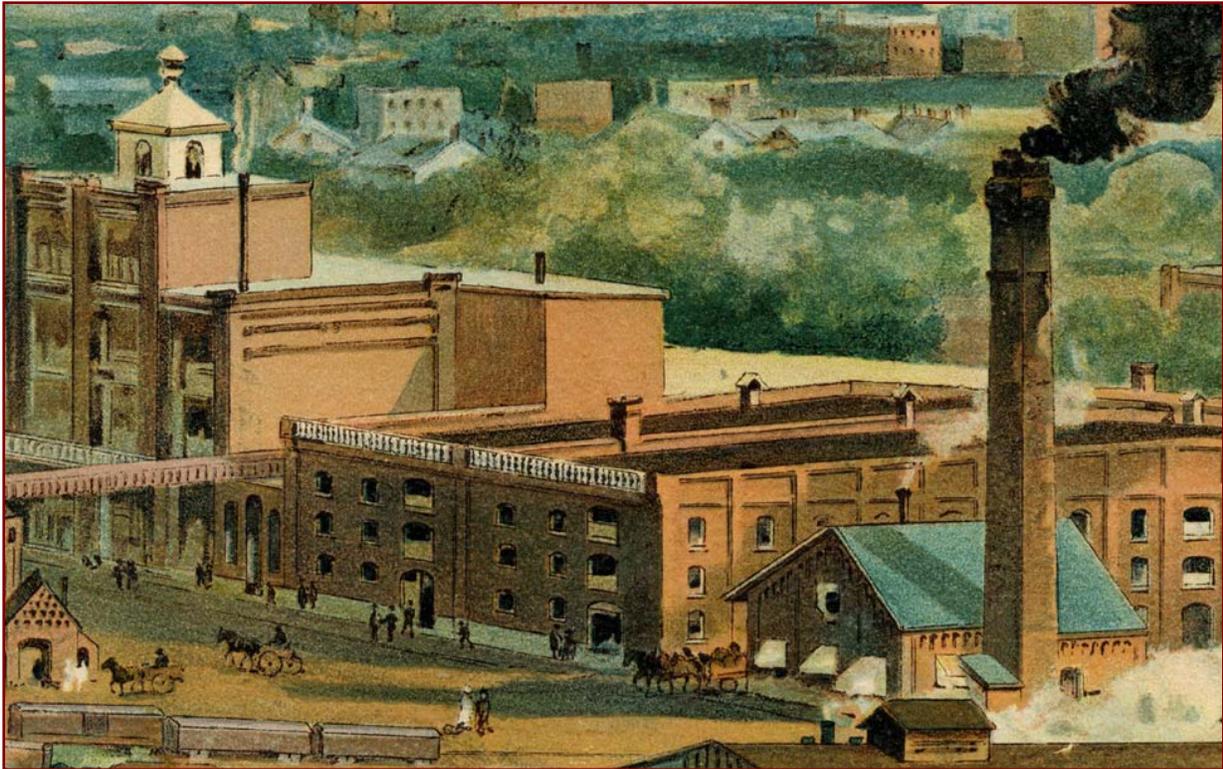


Building Histories

Building 60: Fire Pump House



New Fire Pump House with 85-foot chimney in 1896

DHD

Fire was an ever-present threat at Gooderham & Worts, as the company knew to its cost from the [Great Fire of October 1869](#). After a “disastrous conflagration” on January 6, 1895 had destroyed the *Globe* newspaper building, created “two acres of smoking ruins” in downtown Toronto, and mortally injured Fire Chief Richard Ardagh, who had almost certainly attended the 1869 G&W fire, Gooderham & Worts decided that it could not rely on City fire fighters to protect its valuable and vulnerable establishment. It opted to spend about \$25,000 to create its own fire protection system, which was focused on two ultra-modern Northey pumps installed in new Fire Pump House.

Designed by [David Roberts, Jr.](#), the new Fire Pump House was a two-and-a-half storey, free-standing, red-brick building located at the south end of Trinity Street, near the all-important waters of Toronto Bay. Featuring Roberts’ trademark panel-and-pier construction, especially fine decorative brickwork, and chamfered limestone base, Building 60 turned out to be the last Victorian structure added to the site. Its 85-foot brick chimney completed the distillery’s distinctive nineteenth-century skyline. (Only the base remains on the south façade of today’s building.)

The interior of the building was divided into two separate, but intimately related parts: the Pump Room on the west side, and the Boiler Room on the east side that provided the steam to power the pumps.

The Pump Room was open up to the slope of the roof (as it still is) and originally contained two fire-engine red, Toronto-built, Northey steam pumps – one a compound duplex pump (now on view near Building 9) and another a simple duplex pump. Together, the pumps had a combined pumping capacity of 3,000 gallons per minute when under a pressure of 150 pounds. The pumps were always in a state of readiness, being kept continually under a steam pressure of 90 pounds. When not needed for fire purposes (mercifully, nearly all the time), the Northeys were used to pump water from City mains to the Stone Distillery for cooling and other purposes. In case of fire, the mains could be shut off, the pressure raised to 150 pounds, and the water taken from Toronto Bay through a 24-inch pipe. The fire engines in the Pump Room were supported by a battery of two 100-horsepower Babcock & Wilcox boilers in the adjacent Boiler House. The arched opening between the two halves of the building was later bricked-in, but can still be detected.



Pump House (right), from 1926 plan DHD/CTA 1890s Northey compound duplex pump today

The Fire Pump House was at the centre of a revamped fire-protection system. It included not only the powerful Northey pumps and new boilers, but also a dozen fire-alarm boxes distributed around the site; a dozen new fire hydrants that could send out 24 streams from hoses that were always attached; new tin-clad fire doors; and a private Gooderham & Worts fire brigade composed of employees who were specially trained and equipped. The City's five hydrants remained in place.

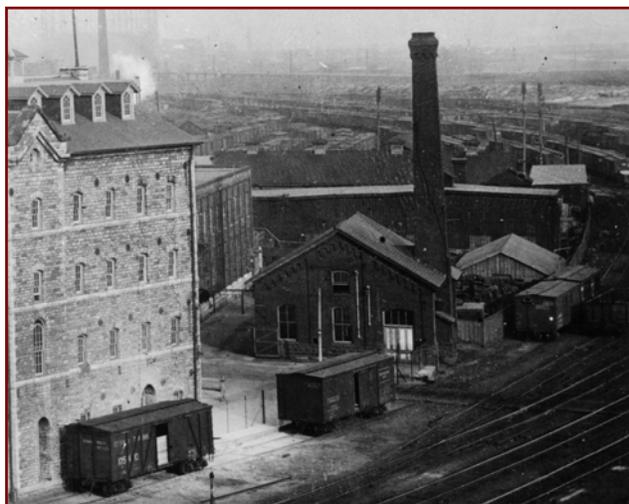
On November 8, 1895, publicity-savvy Gooderham & Worts invited the press, insurance underwriters, and fire experts down to the distillery for an impressive display of pumping power. In one test, a stream two-inches in diameter reached “the unusual distance” of 270 feet horizontally while five smaller streams were also playing out through 200-feet of rubber-lined cotton fire hoses. In another, perpendicular test, a two-inch stream reached the astonishing altitude of about 190 feet, far higher than any building at the distillery.

Mr. Howe, inspector for the fire underwriters, declared this to be “the best two-inch stream” he had ever seen. City Fire Chief Graham (who had recently replaced Chief Ardagh) “could hardly find words to express his delight and satisfaction.” In fact, the politic new chief declared that “he had never seen such a stream in all his experience, and that the exhibition given in Montreal was as nothing compared to the exhibition given” at Gooderham & Worts. The enthusiastic *Globe* reporter concluded, “The engines are finished and equipped in a beautiful manner, and the whole plant and effects are a credit not only to the manufacturers but to the enterprise of the Gooderham & Worts Company.”

Building 60 continued, without significant change, as a fire pump house throughout World War I and on into the twenties. An exterior photograph from that period shows the Pump House next to well-used railway tracks that continued to serve the distillery until it closed in 1990.

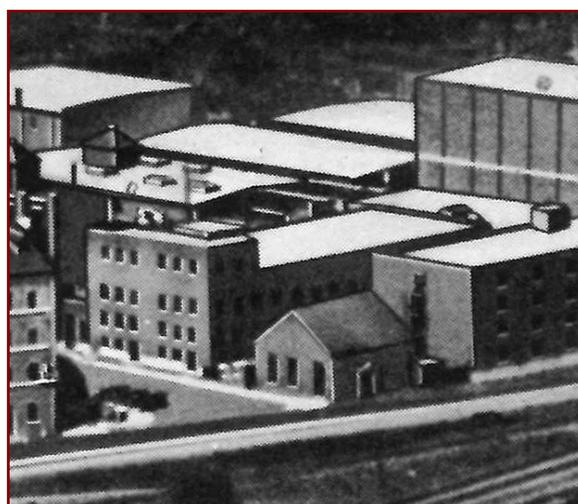
Just when the eastern half of the building was converted into a Canadian Government Excise Alcohol Pump Room remains unknown. What is known is that the source of the water for fire-fighting changed in the late 1920s from Toronto Bay to a 400,000 gallon water tank constructed under the new [Case Goods Warehouse](#) of 1927. This change was probably made because the old shoreline was shifting southward to accommodate the [railway viaduct](#) from the new Union Station and expanses of newly created waterfront land.

By 1937, the great chimney had been removed down to below the eaves, but the precise reason for this change remains unknown. It may signify a change in use, or only a change in equipment.



Fire Pump House, 1918

CTA 1583-xxx



Fire Pump House without chimney, 1937

DHD

Gradually, Building 60 was tied into the broader site by [overhead pipes](#). In some cases, alcohol was pumped from rail cars, through the building, and on to other destinations such as the “Mixing Room” in [Building 61](#). In many cases, the building was used as a convenient place to hang pipes for loading and unloading tanker trucks and railway cars. Some of these can still be seen running from the south end of the building, across Case Goods Lane, past the Cannery buildings, and on to the Pure Spirits complex and [Scale Tank loft](#) on top of Building 61.

The original 1890s steam-powered Northey fire pumps protected the site until the late 1970s when the last stationary steam engineer retired. At that point, two gasoline-powered stationary pumps were installed at the north end of the Pump Room where they remained until about 1990. One of these gas-driven fire pumps, along with a blue control panel, is now on display with the Northey steam pump next to Building 9.



1970s Fire Pump today

Photographer Larry Turner documented the Pump House near the end of its working life, when the west side was still devoted to fire pumps and the east side was used for pumping alcohol on the ground floor and for a sales office on the second floor.



Pump House west side looking north , ca. 1986 LT



Pump House west side looking south , ca. 1986 LT



Pump House east side looking south, ca. 1986 LT



Pump House east side 2nd floor office , ca. 1986 LT

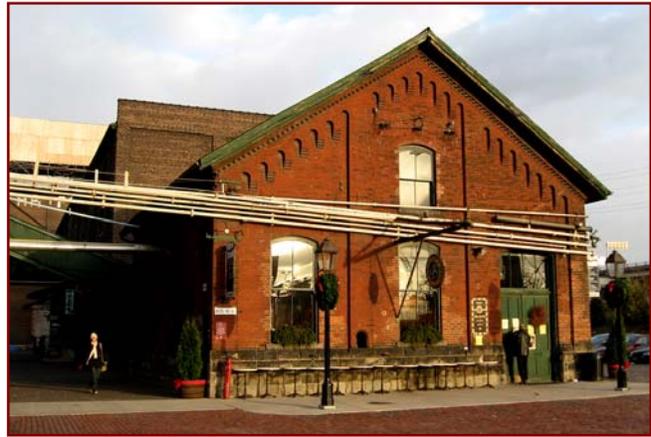
Turner's photograph of the north end of the ground floor where the two bright red fire pumps were located also shows the brick floor, the bricked-in arched opening between the pump room and the old boiler room, the top of the fire gauges peeking over the blue control panel, and the silver-painted brick walls below the pitched roof. The photograph of the south end of the ground floor shows a wooden cabinet near the Trinity Street doorway that contained fire hose, a rope used to adjust the position of rail tank cars hanging under a bricked-in south window, the door to a washroom, and a large, tongue-and-groove wooden storage closet.

Turner's photographs of the east side of Building 60 show an [1890s Burnham simplex pump](#) (upper right) unloading a rail tanker car and sending the alcohol through a long hose snaking along the ground floor toward the Cannery; and the utilitarian, second-floor sales office. (The 1890s pump is now on display across Case Goods Lane in the lobby of Building 59.)

The old Pump House was the first Distillery Building to attract a retail tenant and be transformed from its Victorian industrial past into its new life as one of Toronto's finest independent coffee shops. Not a surprising development. After all, hundreds of people working on transforming the Victorian distillery into a modern arts and culture centre needed coffee, sandwiches and other goodies to keep going, sometimes around the clock, in order to meet their Official Opening deadline of May 22, 2003.



Pump House, June 2002 *Thane Lucas*



Trinity Street Exterior today *SG*

The western Pump Room became the centre of coffee-shop activity. Many original heritage features can still be detected. Red 1890s pressure gauges on the north wall. A curious small arched door once used for fire hoses on the west wall. A tall wooden cabinet once used to store fire hoses on the south wall. A tongue-and-groove wooden storage closet that now provides an entrance to the east side of the building and support for a second-floor seating area. A dramatic, two-storey volume that now contains a huge (new) chandelier. Other adaptations include a new stairway to a second floor quiet area and exhibition space. Windows inserted into the upper walls to provide a sense of space and observation posts. Meanwhile, the old Boiler Room / Alcohol Pump Room to the east has been converted into a coffee-roasting room that sends an acrid-but-enticing scent wafting throughout the Distillery District on roasting days.



Patrons, coffee bar & fire gauges



Coffee roasting



Storage-closet entrance to east

With or without cup in hand, be sure to admire the exterior of the 1895 Pump House. The tall chimney may be long-gone, but many other architectural and industrial highlights remain. The steeply pitched roof, unlike any other on site. The highly decorated western façade featuring arcaded corbels following the gable outline. The little, green-painted hose door. The overhead pipes linking the building with the Cannery and Pure Spirits complexes to the north. Even the shop's sign is attached to a pipe once used for loading and unloading tanker trucks parked below. All in all, the Fire Pump House terminates Trinity Street with a notable architectural exclamation point.

Contemporary quotations about the January 1895 fire and the November 1895 display come from "Two Acres of Smoking Ruins," *The Globe*, January 7, 1895, front page; and "Canadian Enterprise: Fire Protection at Gooderham & Worts' Distillery," *The Globe*, November 9, 1895.

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