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....AT THE FORKS

An architectural book on the City of Chatham.

Text and drawings by Peter D. Charles
Photography and Research by Doug Rylett.

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Created for the
CHATHAM LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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THE MAYOR'S ADDRESS

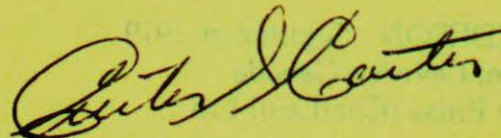
The City of Chatham is pleased to offer to its citizens and visitors our first historical booklet composed by the research team of the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee. The L.A.C.A.C. Committee is a committee of citizens appointed by Council who have a concerned interest in the history of Chatham and who have volunteered to guide municipal government in designation, preservation and promotion of our rich civic heritage. It is important our City grows with a sensitivity and awareness of our past. As we move forward into the 21st Century, the City shares with its citizens pride in our heritage and in the contribution made by our ancestors in the interest of our City.

This is a particularly eventful year for L.A.C.A.C. Not only have they produced this architectural book, but they have also designated our first historic building. Under the Provincial Heritage Act of 1974, the City of Chatham has denoted the outstanding role of the British Methodist Episcopal Church on Wellington Street East, in rebuilding the lives of the City's black ancestors from slavery. This Church is one of several modest structures in East Chatham which gave shelter and spiritual guidance in the years of the "Freedom Train". With this designation the Church is eligible to receive moneys and expertise in its restoration. This is the type of success we all like to report.

It is up to each one of us to start to investigate, appraise and appreciate our strides into the future. We hope this book is one of a series which will guide our guests and ourselves on that assessment.

On Council's behalf, I express our thanks to the L.A.C.A.C. Committee and to Douglas Rylett and Peter Charles for their contribution to Chatham's historical background.

Sincerely,



Curtis G. Carter
Mayor

Author's Foreword

It is the purpose of this book to not just package together an attractive conversational work, but also attempt to spark interest and pride in our civic architecture and history.

As citizens of this community we wish to promote and share this city's attributes with our visitors and fellow citizens.

As future architects we are convinced we live in a city which has the finest array of architectural styles in Ontario as well as some of its richest history. Many intriguing structures remain in their near original condition. We have gained an even greater appreciation for these structures from our research and photography.

As authors of this premier edition we hope we can project some of our enthusiasm to our readers and spur more published material on this part of Ontario.

In no way is this book to be considered a ranking of our most prominent buildings. It is, however, a survey of the context, beauty, and ornamentation of our community. It is a representational rather than definitive piece of workmanship.

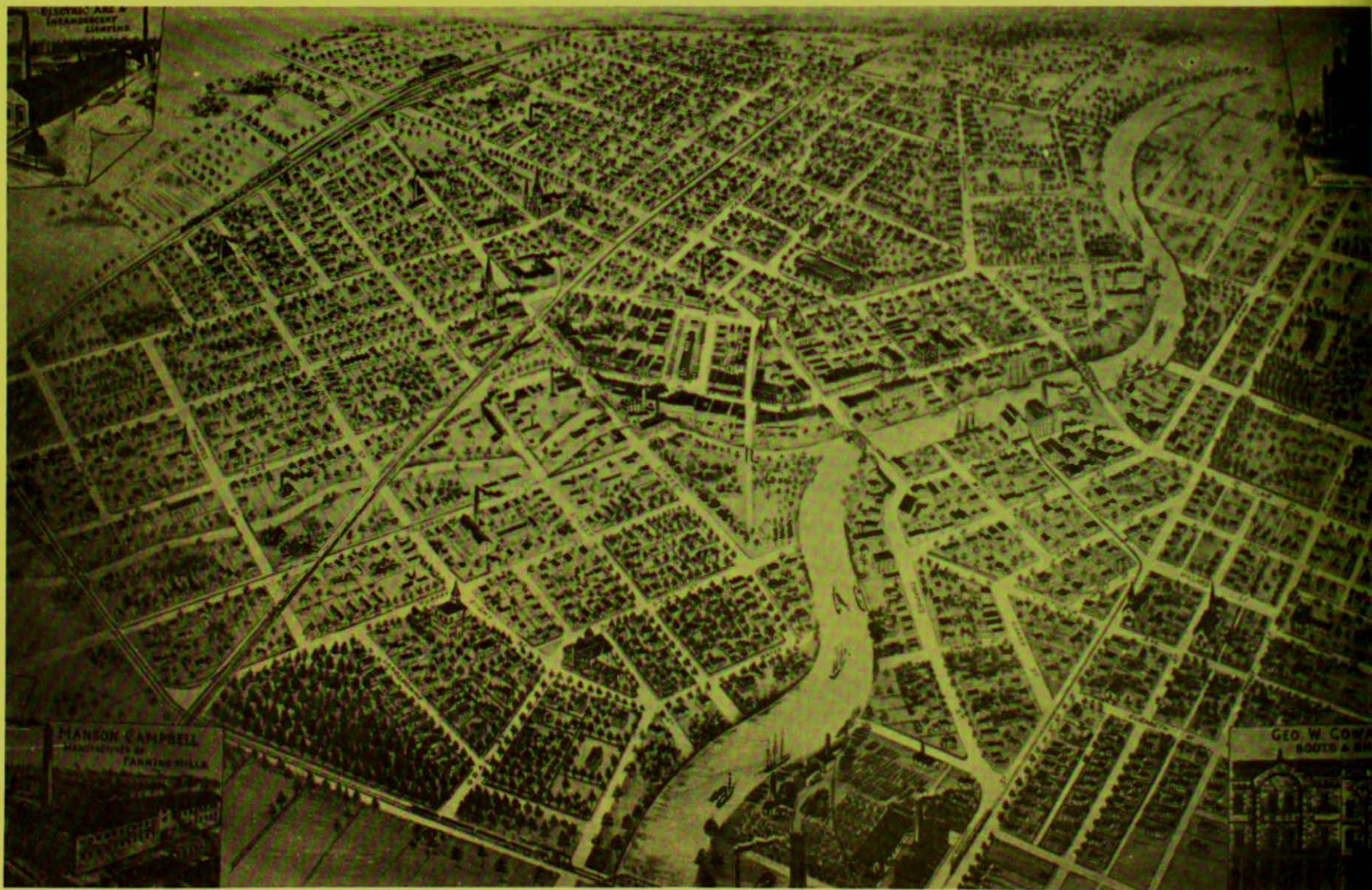
It is our intent throughout the book to project a new perspective in all that is written. Buildings, which have a relatively sound chance of remaining with us have been portrayed through the artists eye of pen and ink sketches. Neglected or extinct structures are portrayed in their past photographic grandeur.

Unfortunately many valuable buildings and sites just could not be included due to our time and space constraints. We apologize for this. However, our omissions would make ideal material for future editions.

We hope the photographs and text we have composed will be warmly appreciated and trigger your imagination of what Chatham could be in the ever approaching future.

Peter D. Charles
Architecture University of British Columbia

Douglas Rylett,
Architecture University of Toronto.



HAND DRAWN MAP OF THE CITY IN 1893 ILLUSTRATING THE MEANDERING OF THE THAMES RIVER.

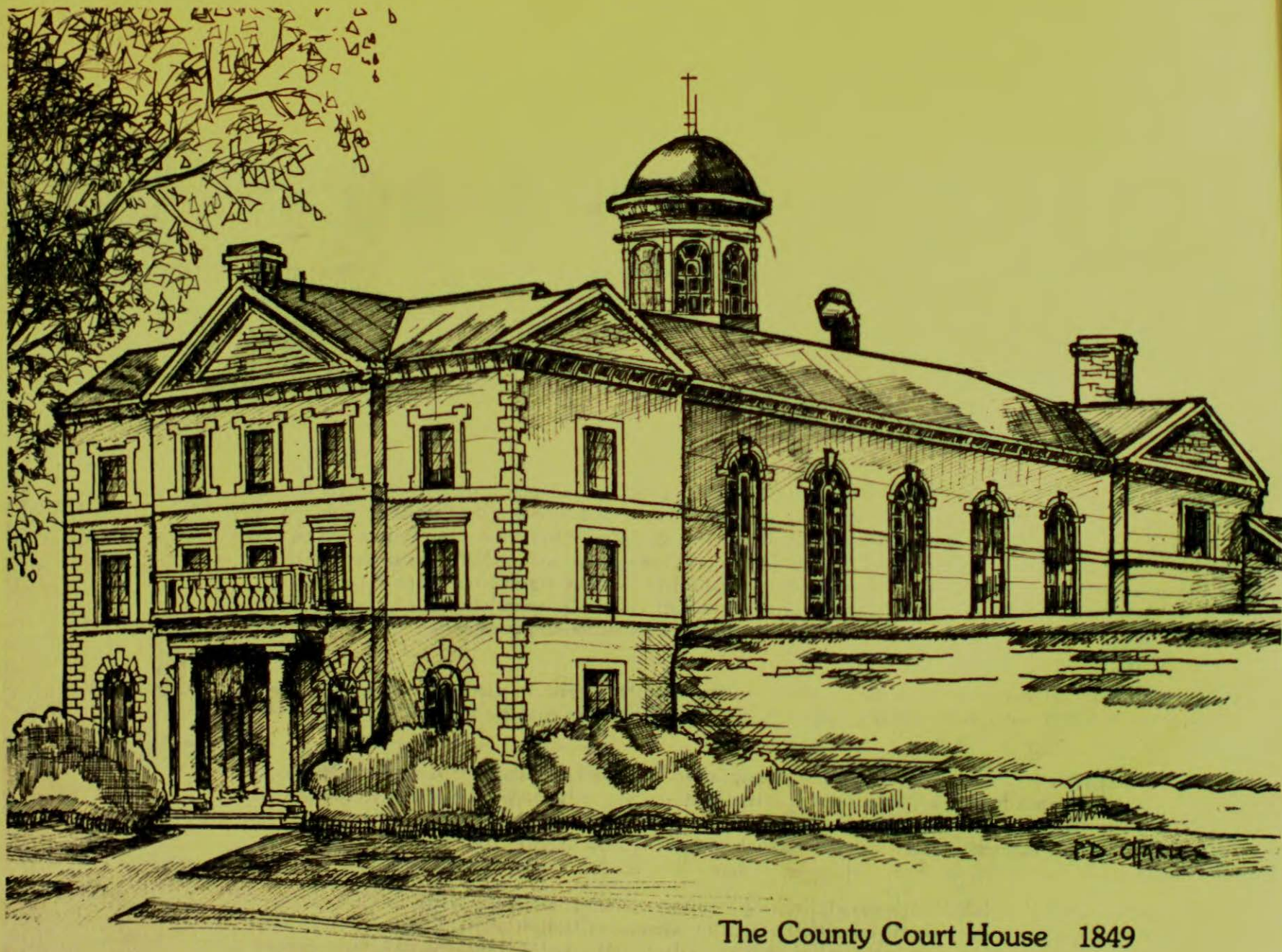
Introduction

In 1790 Mr. Patrick McNiff, Deputy Crown Surveyor was instructed by D. W. Smith, Surveyor General of Canada, Capital at Newark, to detail the extent of Sally Ainsie's reported purchase in 1780 of the entire north bank of the Thames (from the mouth to the forks) and to lay out some sort of order to squatters claims in the southwest region. When Lord Graves Simcoe was installed as Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada in 1791, he was greatly impressed with McNiff's survey report. Simcoe envisioned Chatham as a strategic naval base for the protection of the Thames waterway to his proposed new Upper Canada Capital at London. In 1794 a blockhouse and five gunboats were ordered built. Under a Governor's Order in Council 1795 some 600 Acres were set aside as a townplot and military reserve at Chatham. In that same year Abraham Iredell, Crown Surveyor was instructed to lay out a town plot about this reserve property.

After five years of fruitless attempts to convince the governor of the need for a more secure capital at London, Lord Graves Simcoe transferred to active forces in San Domingo, West Indies. Without Simcoe's direction the reserve properties and townsite were neglected and left to weeds.

It was not until 1828 that the Chatham townsite began to be fully settled. The opening of a stage coach route from Niagara to Detroit in that same year made Chatham a transfer point from land to steam ferry and commercial centre for emigrant trade. Settlers in 1830 petitioned against absentee landowners and previously vacant properties were quickly inhabited. From this point onward Chatham was assured a steady pattern of growth and able to draw upon the talents of a sufficiently large permanent population.

The Parliament of Upper Canada in 1847 passed a bill forming a provisional district of Kent and in 1850 the County of Kent was officially formulated apart from Lambton and Essex Counties. In that same year Chatham became a separate municipality. Through the eighties and into the nineties Chatham eagerly looked forward to City incorporation. By a special Act of Legislature Chatham became a City in 1895. The map on the left shows the City in the year 1893 with much of the street pattern intact as we know it today.



The County Court House 1849

Townscape

With the town plot laid down to take advantage of the Thames River as an inland transportation route and the forks as a naval garrison, the initial pattern of the townscape was determined. The city could develop as a set of spaces in relation to each other.

Iredell adeptly designated church plots, green spaces, a market square and a town hall within his survey of 1795. All these items gave the urban fabric, even in its initial stages, weight and clarity. The site for each public institution was chosen to give it prominence in the community and symbolic importance in relation to the total urban scheme.

It was in 1847 that the Parliament of Upper Canada passed a bill forming the Provisional District of Kent, with its own provisional council. The Iredell town plan began to be fulfilled with this council undertaking to build a courthouse on the designated site. This would be Chatham's first public building.

Through a design competition, the work of William Thomas was chosen, and under the supervision of George Young the plans realized. It was the construction firm of Brown and Baxter who won the contract with a successful bid of \$24,000. One of the many master masons who worked on the site was Alexander Mackenzie, who later became Canada's second Prime Minister (1873 - 1878) and formed Canada's first Liberal government. He worked only a few weeks on the back wall and left to undertake the building of the Sandwich and Sarnia court houses.

Renovations to date have closed the lanterns skylighting to the courtroom on the second floor.

We are fortunate to have an example of architecture by this prominent designer of Upper Canada as well as the craftsmanship of Canada's early statesman. The courthouse is part of a treasured breed of Thomas buildings, which are enjoying a renaissance by heritage planners. They include the St. Lawrence Hall in Toronto, the Don Jail in Toronto, and the City Hall and Market Square in Guelph.



Easterly View of The Bend 1918

W.E.

On King Street


From the log shanties of early settlers like that of William Chrysler (the great grandfather of E. P. Chrysler of automotive fame), Main Street Chatham evolved into a stately collection of Victorian buildings particular only to this area.

Instead of Main Street Chatham drifting into a barrage of highway commercial buildings, or being integrated into a system of perpendicular streets like most Ontario towns, Iredell bent the main thoroughfare to follow the curves of the Thames River.


The commercial district of King Street is clearly terminated at its east end by the vista of the C.P.R. Station, and on the west end by the New Civic Centre. The core area is set apart from the major transit patterns on a north-south axis of St. Clair.

Within these boundaries, a rich streetscape evolved. Early designers respected established building lines and composed a smooth progression of 3 and 4 storey facades. The street space that results is comfortably sheltered. There is a definite human and approachable scale to the downtown buildings. Nowhere else does this facade planning so beautifully executed than on the bend of King Street. Sensitive modern construction could retain this sense of sheltered street space by readdressing existing building lines in any new development.

The streetscape was not only composed of building facades, but also included a large array of "street furniture". A continuous line of awnings and verandas gave the shopper protection from the weather. Elevated sidewalks ferried pedestrians over muddy pathways. The 1920 photo looking from the front of the Market Building (now Canada Trust) boasts a handsome cast fountain, a jewellers street clock and King Street dotted with elegant lamp posts such as are still found on Victoria Avenue between Thames and Amelia Streets.



WESTERLY VIEW OF THE BEND 1904



"STREET FURNITURE" ON KING STREET c. 1920



The Market Square 1880's



MARKET BUILDING FACADE (NEW TOWER) c. 1910



CHATHAM VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE c. 1874

The Market Square

The streetscape opened up into a large market square which centered about the Town Hall and market building. This grew into a splendid focus of downtown with farmers bringing in fresh produce and citizens crowding for carriage space.

"The advent of a thousand farmers on Saturday causes no surprise and double that number have visited the city ... The sight of the variety and early arrival of fruit and vegetables, together with the immense quantities of dairy produce marketed gives the stranger an object lesson on the resources of Kent."

Taken from Peeps of My Life, Wm. Edwin Hamilton.

The market building was not built until after the Municipal-Baldwin Act took effect in January 1, 1850, which gave Chatham and other centres the rights to form as a municipal corporation and its own policing powers. On the agenda of the first council meeting held in the Farmer's Exchange Hotel, January 21, 1851, Councillors approved construction of a Town Hall and Market Building on the designated site in the Iredell town plan of 1795.

The site was chosen not without earlier preparation by the community. In 1835 a petition was brought forward requesting that Michael Smith's cabin and buildings be removed from Iredells Town Hall site. Town officials agreed and compensated Mr. Smith with new property on Lots 79 and 80. No further building was allowed in the area thus giving councillors fifteen years later, a clear site for a Town Hall development.

Victor Lauriston in *Romantic Kent* claims the cost of the new building was \$6000. The Town Hall included a dual purpose council chamber and police court on the second floor, the No. 1 Fire Hall on the first floor, and two jail cells in the basement. Wooden frame market stalls were erected to the rear of the town hall and were almost immediately criticized as being too small and inefficient.

The picture on the lower left shows the Chatham volunteer fire brigade proudly assembled by the market sheds. In 1870 Chatham purchased a fire engine built by the local firm of Hyslop and Ronald. These steam fire engines were originally a specialty product of the firm, but after surpassing the City's specifications by such a margin these Chatham built engines were soon known and sold across Canada.

Today the market stalls have disappeared to make way for the market Parking Garage. The Town Hall on King Street was sold to Gordon Duff in 1950 and remained within the family until 1956 when it was sold to Huron and Erie Trust for a bank. The conversion of the building to a bank removed the remodelled clock tower and the entire front facade. The exterior walls and bricked roof line can still be seen on what is now the Canada Trust building. Remnants of Chatham's first Town Hall will be entirely removed to make way for the City's redevelopment plan.



View South on Fifth Street 1910's

Axial Views

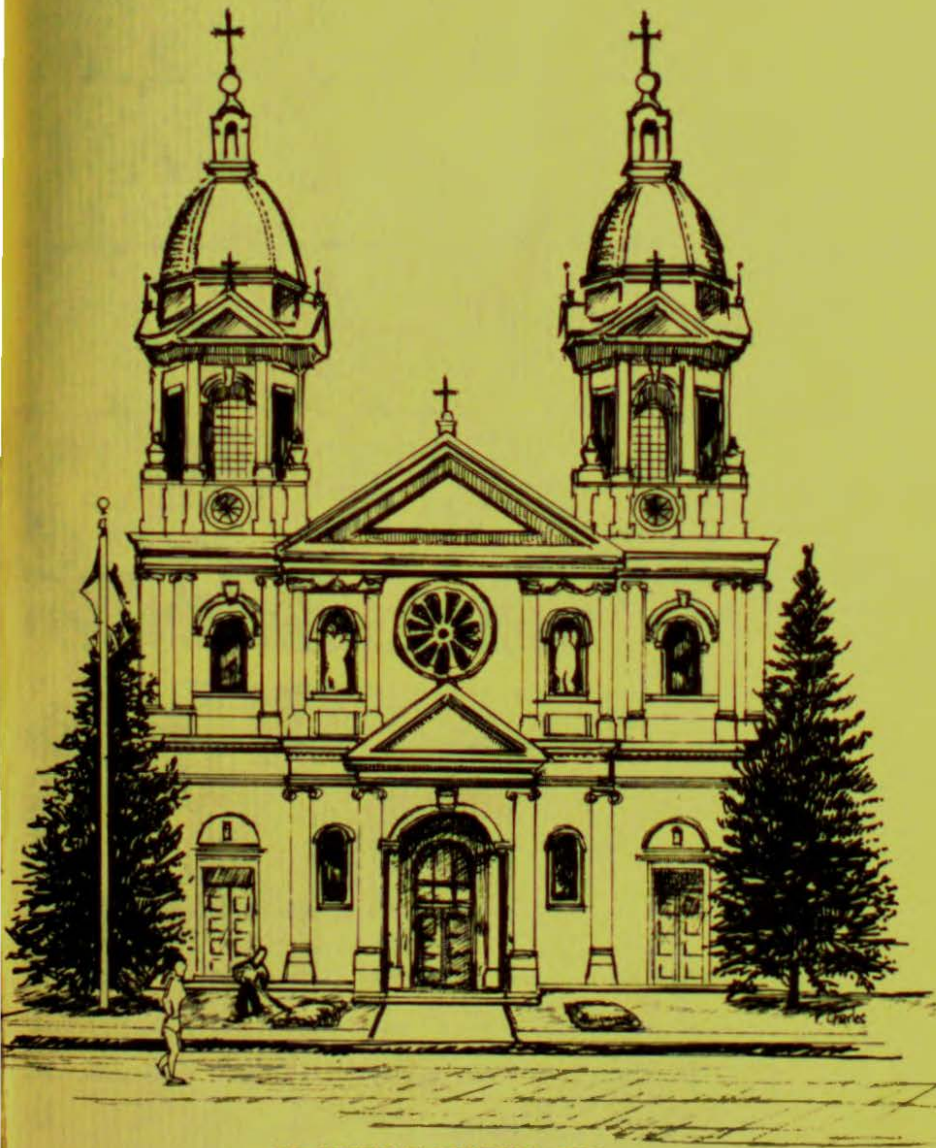
Today a visitor to our City would no doubt complain about the seemingly mindless pattern of streets about the King Street core. However, amid all this confusion there was, and still is in part, a marvelous system of axes and vantages orchestrated from the original town layout.

It was intended that the perpendicular streets crossing King Street would carry people and goods up from the industrial district of the Thames River. In order to draw people into a more cultured part of town, prominent buildings and powerful architecture were placed on the south terminals of these intersecting streets.

St. Joseph's Church is the most formal example we have today, with its classical facade looking toward the river and dominating Fourth Street. This is the second church on the site with the cornerstone laid in 1886.

In a rare design opportunity the renowned architect T. J. Rutley designed a cluster of Romanesque buildings in the late 1880's, which control the views of Fifth, Sixth, and Wellington Streets. The photo on the left shows his Central School (now the Post Office) as one would have seen it from near King Street. (More will be said of this group later in the book.) The towering steeple of Christ Church Anglican on Wellington Street dominates the south boundary of Market Square. It can be seen in the background of the Fire Brigade picture of the previous page. The handsome steeple of this stately church has just recently been reshingled and shored up in July 1979.

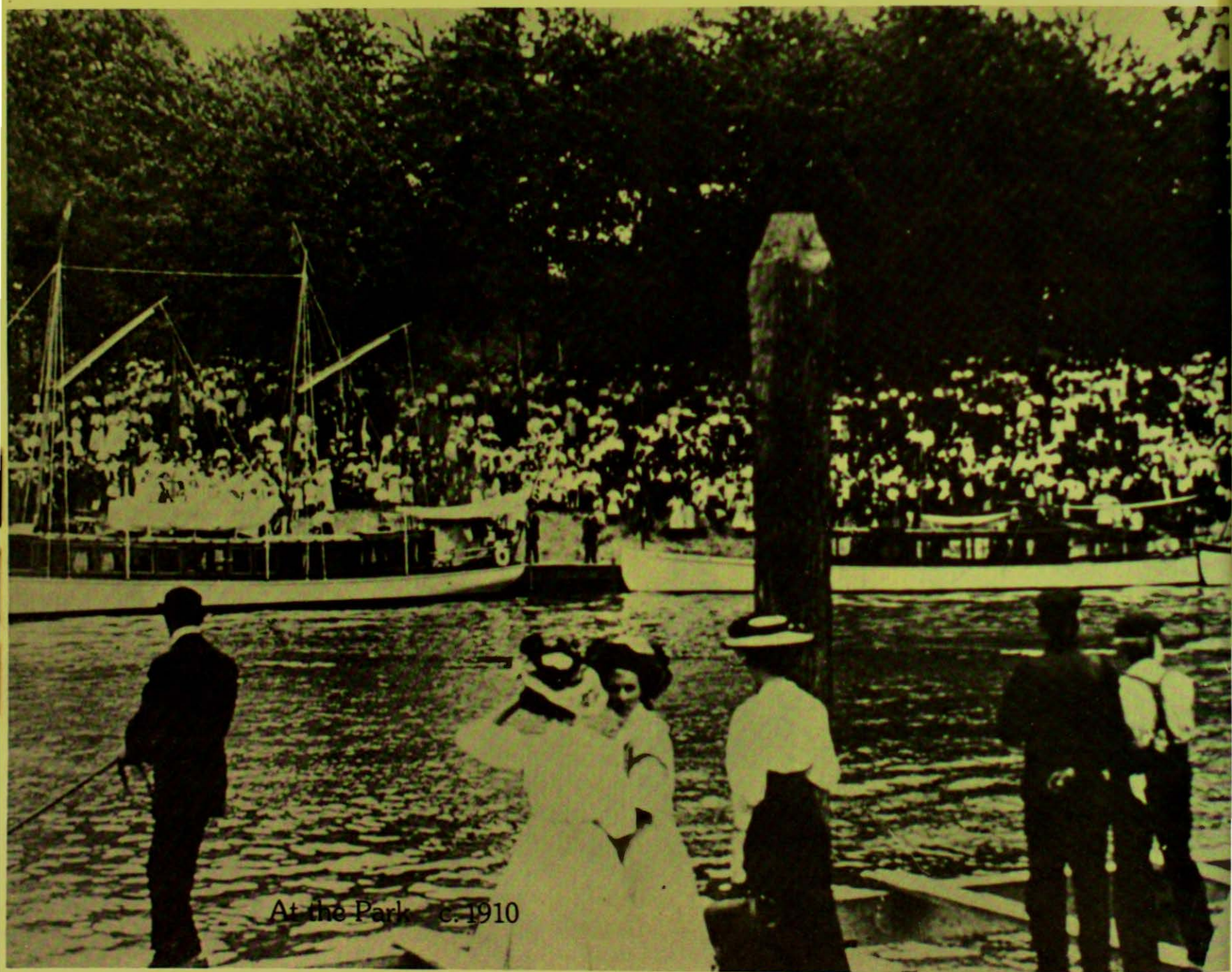
As if to accent the last of the King Street axes, citizens erected the cenotaph at the foot of Sixth Street to honour those fallen in both world wars. At this point a pedestrian can easily walk across the navigational foot bridge built in 1896, which makes a unique link over McGregors Creek of the commercial district to the green space of Tecumseh Park.



ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH 1886
CONTROLS THE FOURTH ST. VIEW



THE CENOTAPH ON
SIXTH STREET



At the Park c. 1910

Tecumseh Park

One wonders what would have been the alternate outcome of the American invasion up the Thames in the War of 1812 if the garrison Lord Simcoe built, had not been left to ruin when he retired to San Domingo. The great Chief Tecumseh died for the British on a swamp further up river at Moraviantown and not on the land that now bears his name. His last battle was a severe defeat for the British and no way a fulfilling end to an astounding career as a warrior.

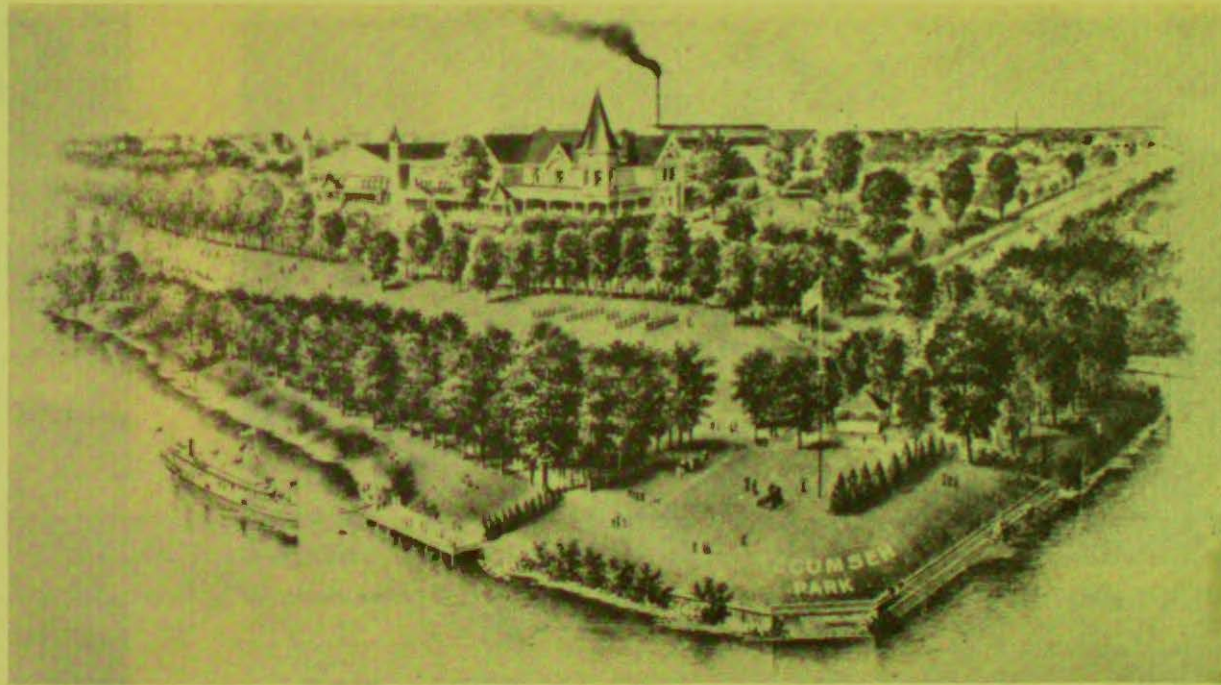
Eventually all the 600 acres of land set apart by the Governors Order in Council were carefully parcelled for settlement and public building.

On July 1, 1880 to the sounds of brass bands and steamer whistles Tecumseh Park was born out of the small remaining parcel of land left for military use. Officially the grounds are still Federally owned and are leased to the City for a nominal fee.

The Americans now come to Chatham in friendship and co-operation and there is no need for stockades and cannon blocks. Excursion steamers used to regularly plough the waves from Chatham to Detroit. Tecumseh Park became a large greeting space dotted with planted trees, and complemented the row of Victorian houses that lined the Park's perimeter.

In order to capitalize on this tourist trade the Chatham Mineral Water Company was incorporated in 1902 and purchased the old Northwood residence (now Thames Arts Centre) opposite the park for a health spa. When the special sulphur springs dried up, the Sanitorium was expanded and became known as the Hotel Sanita in 1905. By 1924 the hotel was purchased and converted to the Chatham Vocational School. The auditorium and gymnasium now compose the Thames Arts Centre.

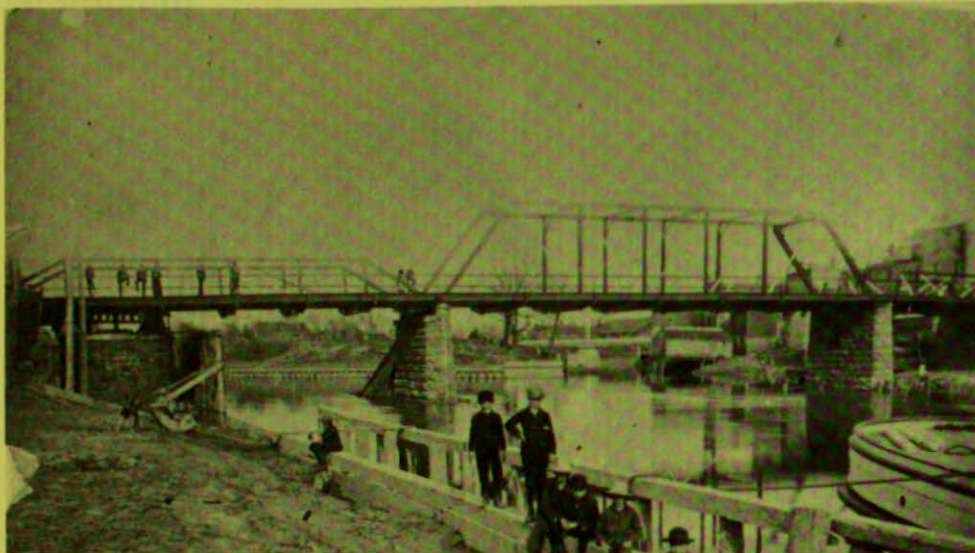
In 1905 the military, under federal supervision built a new armouries. This rugged structure, which still stands today has a large annex to the rear and three office floors and mess halls to the buildings front. From within the annex all three floors are serviced by two outstanding wrought iron staircases.



TECUMSEH PARK GREETES AN EXCURSION STEAMER
THE HOTEL SANITA ON THE PARK'S EDGE 1905



THE ARMOURIES 1905



Bridge Committee, 1884 **Chatham Bridge** Bridge Committee, 1884
 Erected in the Winter of 1884-5.

S. HADLEY, Mayor WILLIAM GRAY, N. MASSEY, O. O. WOOTY, JOHN CARPENTER MAA' HOLZEN.	W. S. POPE, C. E., Detroit, J. O. McHABB, Chatham, BARBOCK & FLOOK, SMITH BRIDGE COMPANY, Toledo,	Designer. Engineer in Charge. Contractors for Substructure. Contractors for Superstructure.	S. HADLEY, Mayor JAMES BANNING WILLIAM YOUNG JOHN ROBERTSON JOHN CARPENTER
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ON THIS PAGE, THE 1885 FIFTH STREET BIRDGE VIEW FROM NORTH BANK, ADS FROM 1914 "PLANET SOUVENIR" AND OSSIFRAGE STEAMER 1912.

The T. H. TAYLOR CO., Limited

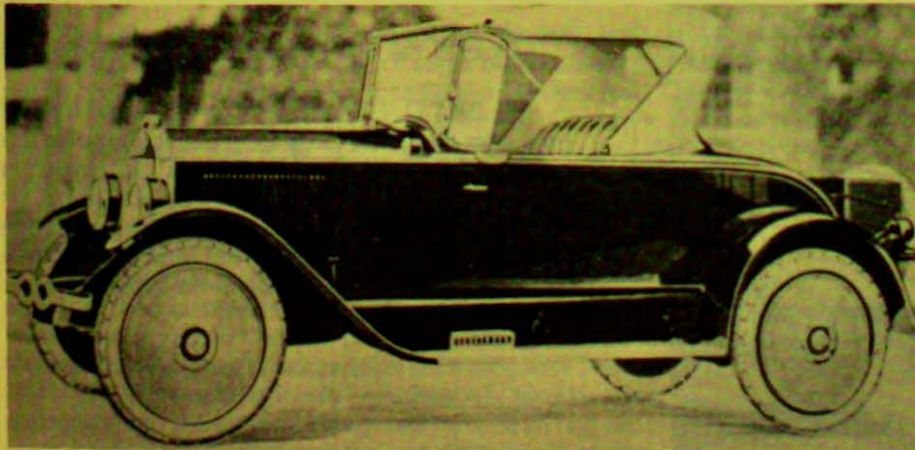
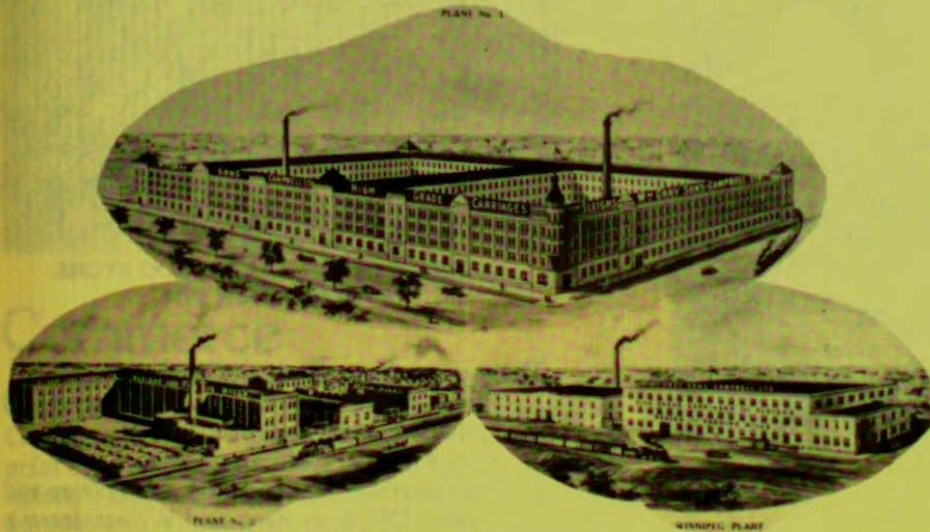
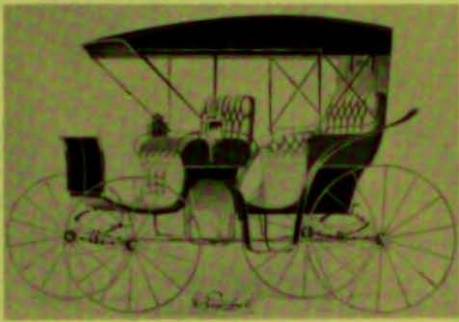
MILLERS and MANUFACTURERS
 CHATHAM, ONTARIO, CANADA



Beaver and Daisy Flour Mills



CAPACITY 500 BBL. PER DAY
 1885-1886, 1887-1888, 1889-1890, 1891-1892, 1893-1894, 1895-1896, 1897-1898, 1899-1900, 1901-1902, 1903-1904, 1905-1906, 1907-1908, 1909-1910, 1911-1912, 1913-1914, 1915-1916, 1917-1918, 1919-1920, 1921-1922, 1923-1924, 1925-1926, 1927-1928, 1929-1930, 1931-1932, 1933-1934, 1935-1936, 1937-1938, 1939-1940, 1941-1942, 1943-1944, 1945-1946, 1947-1948, 1949-1950, 1951-1952, 1953-1954, 1955-1956, 1957-1958, 1959-1960, 1961-1962, 1963-1964, 1965-1966, 1967-1968, 1969-1970, 1971-1972, 1973-1974, 1975-1976, 1977-1978, 1979-1980, 1981-1982, 1983-1984, 1985-1986, 1987-1988, 1989-1990, 1991-1992, 1993-1994, 1995-1996, 1997-1998, 1999-2000, 2001-2002, 2003-2004, 2005-2006, 2007-2008, 2009-2010, 2011-2012, 2013-2014, 2015-2016, 2017-2018, 2019-2020, 2021-2022, 2023-2024, 2025-2026, 2027-2028, 2029-2030, 2031-2032, 2033-2034, 2035-2036, 2037-2038, 2039-2040, 2041-2042, 2043-2044, 2045-2046, 2047-2048, 2049-2050, 2051-2052, 2053-2054, 2055-2056, 2057-2058, 2059-2060, 2061-2062, 2063-2064, 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1923 20M GRAY DORT ROADSTER

Industry

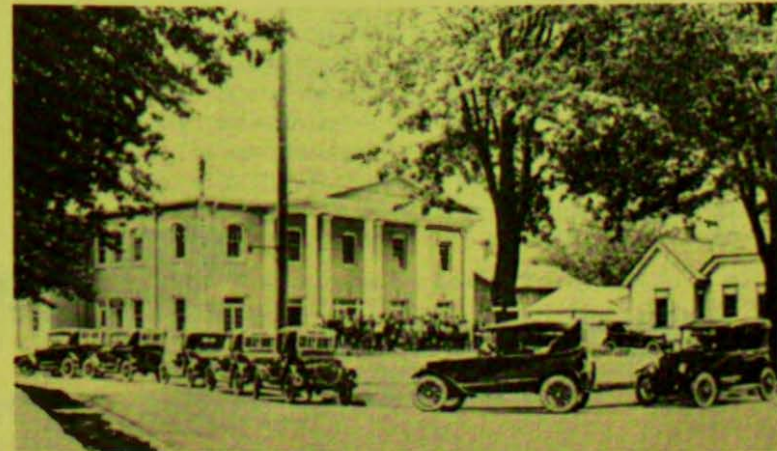
*"Don't you see the dashing foam
The spray of one returning home
So long before the others?
How swiftly she the water walks
How crowded are the Chatham docks
To welcome home "The Brothers"*

This is an excerpt of a poem written about 1841 by A. S. Holmes about the 150 ton steamboat "The Brothers". The boat was built on McGregors Creek in 1839 and regularly ran to Detroit before the coming of the railroad.

No one can doubt the tremendous role of river craft like "The Brothers" on the old river Thames, in developing early industry in the city.

From a ready supply of hardwoods both shipped by boat and logged from the area grew the Gray Carriage Company. This is typical of the area companies which had small beginnings and rapidly developed to national stature.

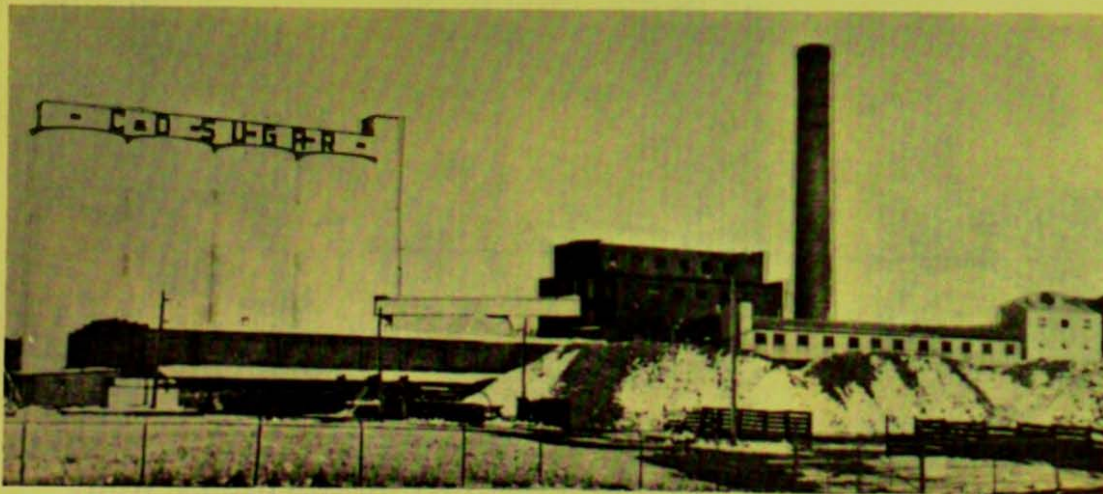
At the turn of the century Manson Campbell a producer of old kitchen cabinets and fanning mills joined in partnership with William Gray a carriage manufacturer to form the Gray Manson Campbell Company. Both could see the coming of motorized vehicles. It was Bill Gray who recruited Dallas Dort of Flint Michigan from Durant Motors (later became General Motors) to design and engineer a motorized carriage in 1914. The Gray Dort Company as it was called were rapidly producing 15,000 vehicles a year by 1923 and possessed 300 dealers from the existing Gray carriage sales network. With an aluminum engine block and a suspension system similar to Rolls Royce it was a favourite of prairie farmers in Canada.



GRAY RECREATION HALL - PRESENT MASONIC TEMPLE



THE CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY STATION



CANADIAN AND DOMINION SUGAR PLANT KING AND MERRIT AVE.



EXTERIOR OF C.H. GUNN DRUG STORE
EBERTS BLOCK 1914

There were three plants in Chatham:

- 1 Sheet Metal Plant on St. Clair and Third Street (now Harvey's)
- 2 Body Plant on Colborne Street
- 3 The Assembly Plant on Park and William and a Sales Office on King and William (now a muffler shop).

In 1920 the plant investment was \$1,250,000.

In 1924 D. Dort decided to retire and a short time later died. The Gray Dort Company could not survive without its American Engineering counterpart and folded in 1925. The only reminder left today of this thriving industry is the Recreation Hall on Centre Street (now the Masonic Temple) and the William Gray mansion on William Street.



INTERIOR OF C.H. GUNN DRUG STORE 1914

Commerce

The first railway to come to Chatham was the Great Western rail which arrived in 1854 and was later succeeded by the Grand Trunk Canadian National. Although Chatham had been established as a transfer point for the Niagara-Detroit stage coach route in 1830, the coming of the railway guaranteed that there would be steady industrial growth through to the 1900's. Local industry could easily reach a national network of sales with similar success of the Gray Carriage Company.

The Canada and Dominion Sugar factory built in 1916 with a processing capacity of 1500 tons of sugar beets a day relied heavily on rail for its coal supply and delivery of its finished table sugar. Through the war years, Chatham and area supplied much of Canada's domestic sugar needs. However, this huge plant, located at the end of King Street West, was completely removed over a period of four years beginning in 1974. The labour in sugar beets could not compete economically with raw sugar from cane fields in the West Indies and Cuba.

With the railway connection, many Chatham merchants were able to supply to their customers exotic foods and more varied finished goods. The "Chatham Souvenir" which promoted the virtues of the city, proudly displayed some store interiors in its 1914 edition. It was common for stores of this era, to have luxuriously high shop windows to maximize the amount of daylight into the interior. A high ceiling of 12-14 feet accommodated these large windows and left space for hot summer air to rise.



WILLIAM ANDERSON GROCERY STORE 1914
PRESENTLY OSTRANDER

We have shown just a few photographs of the exterior and interior of the C. H. Gunn Drug Store which occupied the main floor of the present Eberts Building on the north-west corner of King and Fifth Streets.

It should be noted that the Eberts Block is one of the oldest four storey commercial blocks in downtown Chatham, if not all of Ontario. This building was built by the wealthy ship-owner brothers of William and Walter Eberts in 1855 and has tremendous architectural merit. Its structure was built of substantial materials and technique in comparison to its contemporary wood and clap board shops of muddy King St. The site at the river edge called for massive stone footings to support its masonry walls. A strong "brick box" resulted with hewn timbers tightly spaced and tied to these masonry walls. The entire system has endured 124 years of flood and high water. In addition to its structural details, this building was built with an intricate system of fireplace heating. Today a stately row of chimneys dot the silhouette of this architectural relic.

The Canadian Pacific Railway was the last of the railways to come to Chatham in 1889. With its outstanding location as gateway to the city, the company felt a little more prestigious architecture was in order. We don't know who the architect was, but it is clear he was influenced by H. H. Richardson's design for a station in North Easton Mass. built in 1887. The low unbroken roof profile and handsome stone arches express the enduring power of the railway through their massiveness.



Corner of King St. and William St. 1900's



SCANE'S OPERA HOUSE 1880

PLAYER'S TROUPE, SCANE'S OPERA HOUSE 1891



The picture on the far left shows a view of King looking west from the steps of the C.P.R. station. The Merrill Hotel which still stands today although right next to the downtown redevelopment, was built in 1895. On the right side of the street stood the C.P.R. Hotel with its distinctive turrets city's finest hotel. The William Pitt Hotel replaced it in 1930 after the former structure was destroyed by fire. Now after 49 years of service, the William will disappear for Chatham's redevelopment scheme.

By 1913 there were eight hotels on King Street which provided a variety of night life for the city. With improved transportation via the railway, the city was treated with travelling theatre troupes. The grandest of all live theatres was the Scanes Music Hall built by Ebenezer Scane in 1872. The hall was built at a cost of \$40,000 and could seat 1200 in its three storey theatre. In 1910 under F.H. Brisco's ownership, the structure received another floor between the mansard roof and second level of 1880 version shown in the drawing. It began a new life as the Brisco Hotel. In 1932 the building was sold to Charles Edelstein, when the mansard roof was removed and the present facade added. The building's main level is now a clothing store with modest apartments on its upper levels. One can still see the opera stage door to the rear of this intriguing building.

We have discussed how the townscape was patterned from the river, and how the city was composed of many spaces and parts. We have briefly sketched the diversity of industry evolving within that townscape, and also how industry gained its impetus from the river. With that context in mind, we as citizens can choose to accept, reject or adjust the townscape that we have inherited.

In the next two sections we shall briefly present the work of two turn of the century designers, T. J. Rutley and J. L. Wilson. Now, you can see how they interpreted their townscape and designed to suit it.



CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY STATION c. 1889



Harrison Hall 1889



T. J. Rutley

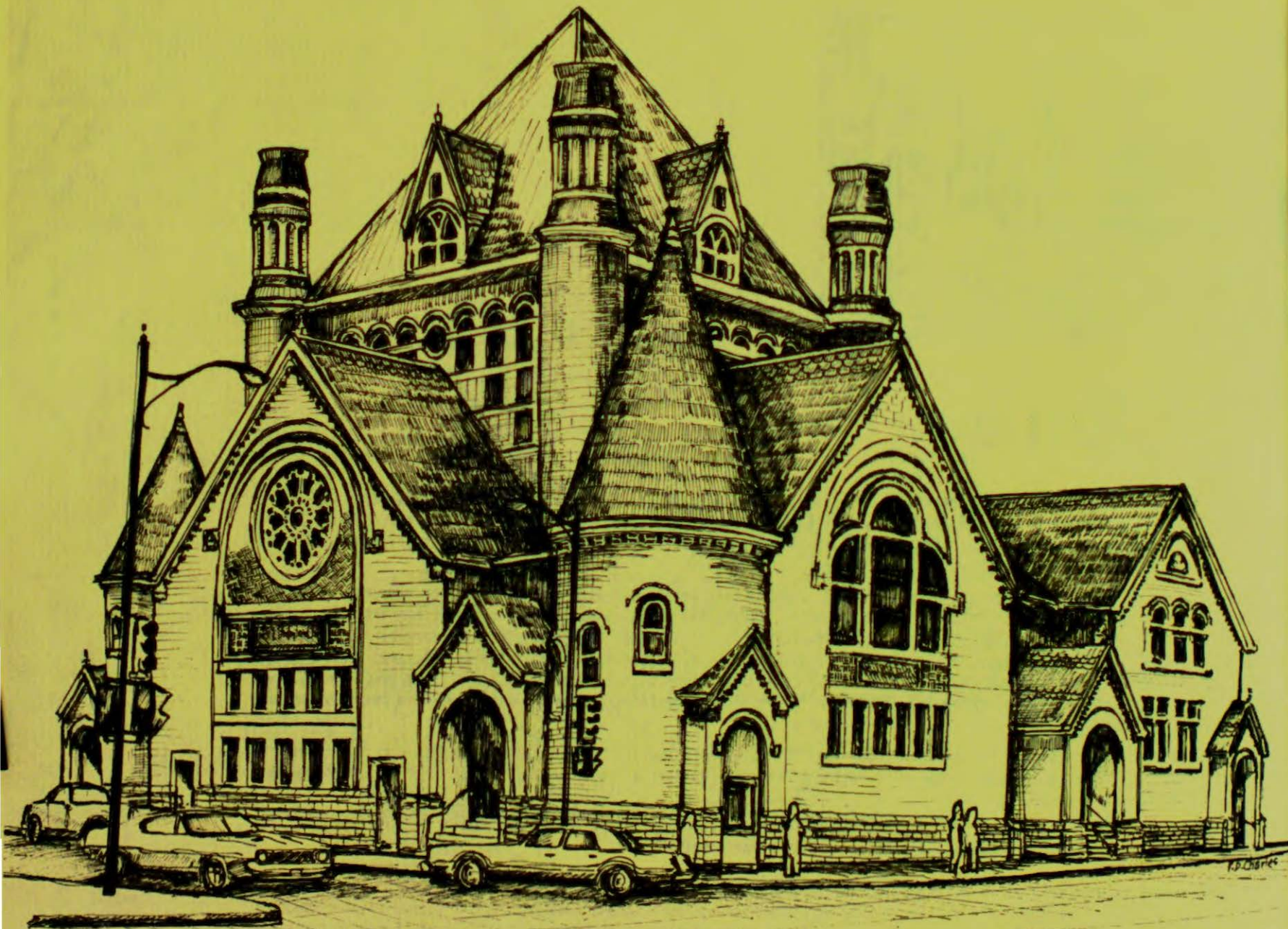
Chatham had three architects by the name of Rutley. The design duo of Thomas Rutley born September 14, 1847, a designer, and William Frederick born March 23, 1855, a draftsman and supervisor were in partnership until the latter 1880's. There is little known about a third architect named W. A. Rutley who came to Chatham in 1858. The closest relationship he could be to the two other designers is a cousin of their father T. R. G. Rutley.

It is the work of Thomas John and William Frederick which is most prominent in Chatham. Rarely does a designer get the chance to use the corners of a downtown intersection to design a set of buildings in relationship to each other. At the five street intersection of Fifth, Sixth and Wellington Streets, Thomas John Rutley was able to design three outstanding Richardsonian Romanesque buildings. Proudly displayed on the left is Harrison Hall, Chatham's former City Hall. It housed both City and County officials up until 1950 when the County moved to its new building on the site of the old Court House on Grand Avenue West. The initial cost of the building of \$38,233 was shared by the County and City governments. The Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons laid the corner stone August 27, 1889.

Harrison Hall was named after the then Chief Justice of the Queens Bench the honourable Robert Alexander Harrison. His works on municipal matters combined in a book called the Municipal Manual were said at the time to be without precedent in England or the United States.

Judge Harrison had been one of three arbitrators who fixed the northern and western boundaries of Ontario in 1877. He died one year later at the age of 45 and the hall was named in his memory.

Romanesque is characterized by its round arched style. Richardsonian Romanesque is immediately distinguishable by its whole or part rock faced masonry with arches, lintels, and other structural details of a different stone than the walls. Harrison Hall is completed in the finest of that tradition which was devised by the American architect Henry Hobbs Richardson. Layers of dirt and weathering have concealed its remarkable masonry of beige white stone used in contrast to the red brick walls. Rich terra cotta detailing adorn the perimeter. Unlike any other masonry building straight topped windows are divided into



First Presbyterian Church 1892



**A VIEW OF CENTRAL SCHOOL, HARRISON HALL AND ROOF OF
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN FROM SIXTH STREET**

Richardsonian Romanesque

rectangular lights by stone mullions and transoms. Arched windows are used on top of these mullions in Harrison Hall as a new interpretation by T.J. Rutley. In addition, a set of high corbelled chimneys have been added to the tradition.

Its first two floors of perimeter office space with adjacent vaults and unlimited natural lighting, was designed by T.J. Rutley for City and County professionals of treasury, planning and clerical staff.

On the third floor are two surprisingly large halls with 16 foot ceilings, unobstructed by columns or supports. The rotunda room has a bay of windows which were specially designed to give specific views of First Presbyterian, Christ Church and Post Office (formerly Central School). This inspiring space is designed as an excellent showroom or public meeting space for service clubs.

Harrison Hall is located within the commercial district and nucleus of downtown. The lack of street frontage to stage the building was one of its criticisms even at the time of opening in 1889. A garland of trees and a fountain at the foot of the flagpole attempted to remedy this situation.

First Presbyterian Church was the second building to appear in this Romanesque grouping on Fifth and Wellington. It was built by the joint congregation of St. Andrew's parish and the Wellington Street parish now Smith's Seed Company.

The design of the Church is modelled after H. H. Richardson's then revolutionary Trinity Church in Boston. The Presbytery was so pleased with its design as a speakers church that replicas were built in Paris, Ontario and Detroit Michigan. Both these buildings can be seen today. The church's huge 108 x 93 interior is composed of four alcoves with the northern alcove sheltering the organ and creating a dramatic backdrop for the pulpit and choir. The congregation is seated about this setting in the remaining three alcoves, thus creating the entire interior space a sanctuary. This exciting church officially opened July 1, 1895.

The Central School was the third and final building in Rutley's street scheme. This building stood on the present site of Chatham's Post Office. In fact, it was the third school to be built on that site. The first was a frame building built in 1831. When the new Central School opened in 1896 it replaced all other ward schools in Chatham and abolished all segregated schools that existed at that time. The school was the largest in the province when it opened with a staff of 24 teachers. Its second closest rival was Ryerson School in Toronto with 22 teachers.

By the early 1950's the school board felt that there was too much noise and danger from cars in the area to keep using the school. It was demolished in 1954 for the Federal Building. Profits from the sale of the land to the government went towards construction of Tecumseh and McGregor High Schools.



14 KING ST. WEST

At the end of King Street East near the C.P.R. station stands a really outstanding group of store fronts. The George Stephens Hardware Store is a fine example of a type of construction that is now extremely rare in North America. Its all glass front caused quite a sensation when it opened in 1888. It is made possible by the use of a light weight cast iron frame and bolt on cast facade. This practice is the forerunner of the modern skyscraper and originated on the east coast of the United States in the 1840's. As a supplier of cast iron fittings George Stephens

probably made the facade himself as a proud show place of the virtues of cast iron. This would account for the extraordinary degree of ornamentation.

The Chatham Tri-Weekly Planet reports with enthusiasm, George Stephens' new hardware store and of his dry goods shop just completed in the Degge Estate block. We have enclosed the article dated September 10, 1888 so that you can also discover that Thomas J. Rutley was praised architect of these two fine structures.

The dry goods shop stood on the site of the former Marks and Spencer store and portions of its sidewalls composed that newer structure.



DRAWING OF PRESENT KING ST. FACADES FROM MERRILL HOTEL TO MAYCOURT SHOP 1978

"Two Fine Buildings

Mr. George Stephens & The Degge Estate Make Important Additions to the Building Investments of the Town:

Mr. George Stephen's fine new building is now about completed and his extensive stock is being put into place. The old building, 65' x 25' has been completely torn down and built anew from the foundations up. The foundation is of cement and on it rests three storeys of brick, the first fourteen feet high and the other two twelve feet each, with a splendid galvanized iron front, in imitation of cut stone work, 60 feet high including the pinnacles. It has plate glass in each storey and the centre of the second is the largest light in town 8' x 10'.

The lights downstairs in the front are 6' x 13'. In the inside is a large new elevator which runs from the cellar to the third storey. The workshop has been changed from the back of the second flat in the old building to the third flat in the front, and will be connected by a dummy waiter and speaking tubes with the first floor, thus avoiding noise and obtaining convenience. The office too has been changed from the front to the back part of the first floor. The whole building is 120 feet deep, three storeys high in front, and two in the rear, with cellar under all halfway back. The first floor will be occupied by

hardware, stoves, cutlery, house-furnishings, etc. The second floor in front is built as a showroom for scales, agricultural implements, etc. and the back part of the store a store room for glass, and the third floor will be devoted completely to tinware. The store as completed will present a new departure and that is the building of shelves clear up to the ceiling, which will be accessible by a travelling ladder, the first of its kind used in Chatham. The whole cost will not be less than \$8,000 and when completed and in proper order, the building will be one of the finest in Chatham for business purposes. Mr. Stephens is to be congratulated upon the enterprise and success indicated thereby. Not only that, but his new edifice adds materially to the appearance of the street.

The other new building now in course of completion is that of the Degge estate, next to the Post Office bookstore.

It is a two storey brick, with basement, concrete floor and brick foundation. It has a frontage of 40 feet with a depth of 80 feet and consists in the interior of one large store supported by rows of iron pillars in the centre. The first or store floor is 14 feet to the ceiling, 38' x 80', and will contain dry goods, millinery, etc. and the upper floor will be used as a show room

and carpet loft. Like the George Stephens building it has a handsome front, approaching the Moorish in style, surrounded by galvanized iron corners, cornices and railings. The store front consists of plate glass, having 4 panes, 78" x 156" in dimensions. The upper storey has fancy windows of plate and leaded glass and is 12' to the ceiling. The whole front is about

40' in height and has an attractive appearance. The entire building will be occupied by Thomas Stone's extensive stock of drygoods, etc.

Mr. Thomas J. Rutley, architect, has both of the above buildings in hand, and their general appearance reflects highly upon his taste and skill as an architect."



THE ELEGANT FACADE OF STONE STORE STORE LATER BECAME THE WALKER'S STORE



Carnegie Library 1902



CANADA BUSINESS COLLEGE 1905

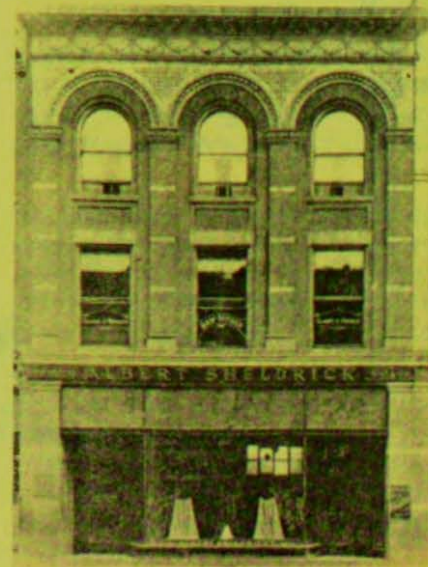
J.L. Wilson and Sons

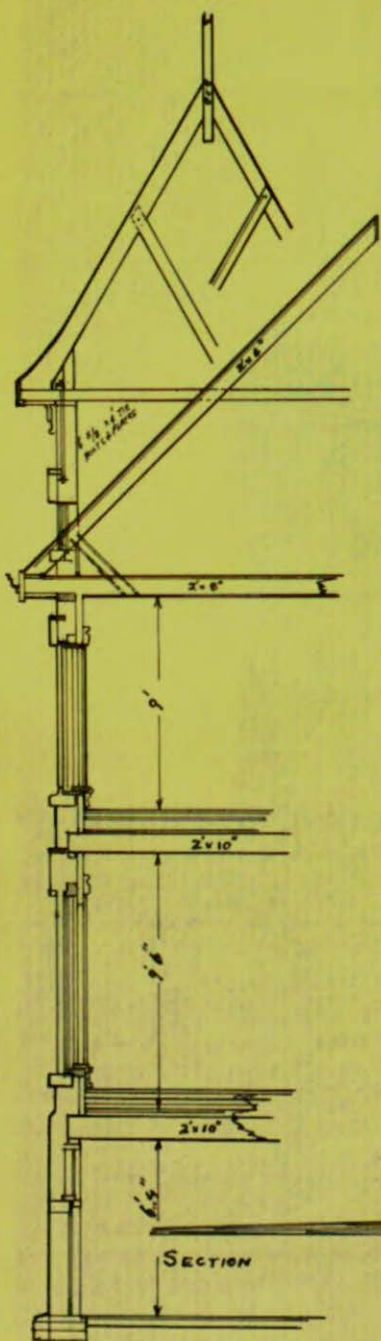
Today much of James L. Wilson's work remains in the form of residential architecture, although he was responsible for several major public buildings in Chatham. It is not known where he received his formal training as an architect, but he was an accomplished carpenter in his youth and could have earned the practice by apprenticeship.

The Chatham Daily Planet, November 10, 1910 announced that his son James William was one of seventeen successful applicants who competed with University students to receive their practising licenses from the Royal Institute of Canadian Architects. Earlier to this time, William worked as an aid within his father's practice. With his accreditation in hand, he joined in full partnership with his senior a short time later.

In 1911 James L. Wilson moved to Fairgrove, Michigan, to accompany his son, who had just opened a new practice in that city. James L. Wilson remained in that community until his death in March 19, 1930, at age 85.

J. L. Wilson and Sons most important design was the Carnegie Library completed in 1902. This building was one of a chain of libraries built across Canada by the Carnegie Foundation to foster culture and the arts. It was designed in the classic fashion of the Beaux Arts School. The cross shaped floor plan yielded a design which was symmetrical and capable of future expansion in any direction. Large tall columns supported a pediment over the main entrance and a central dome flooded the reading hall with sunlight. The new Centennial Library now takes the place of this grand structure.





BRICK PLAN ON
CHIMNEY



BRICK PANEL ON
NORTH SIDE WALL

FRONT ELEVATION
SCALE 1/4" TO 1 FT

J. L. WILSON ARCHT
CHATHAM ONT

BLUEPRINTS FOR 53 WILLIAMS ST. CHATHAM ONT.



CHATHAM-KENT MUSEUM —
59 WILLIAM STREET

53 WILLIAM STREET

463 KING STREET W.

471 KING STREET W.

40 LACROIX STREET

Turret Houses

Strong overtones of Moorish architecture were used in Wilson's design of the Canada Business College built in 1905. The two square towers with ornate roofs give the building balance and stability. The Ontario provincial Police, who now occupy the building, have refitted the entrance with a new granite staircase and re-chinked the brick facing. A sketch of this building on Queen Street is enclosed on this page.

It is quite possible the Albert Sheldrick Store (now the Mounteer and Eddington Store, King St.) was designed by J.L. Wilson and Sons. The brick detailing and front facade made of galvanized sheet panels is remarkably similar to the facade on his Glassford Hotel. The Glassford building on the south-east of the Market Square is presently the Chatham office of the Windsor Star. Both these urban buildings will have to step aside to make way for Chatham's redevelopment scheme.

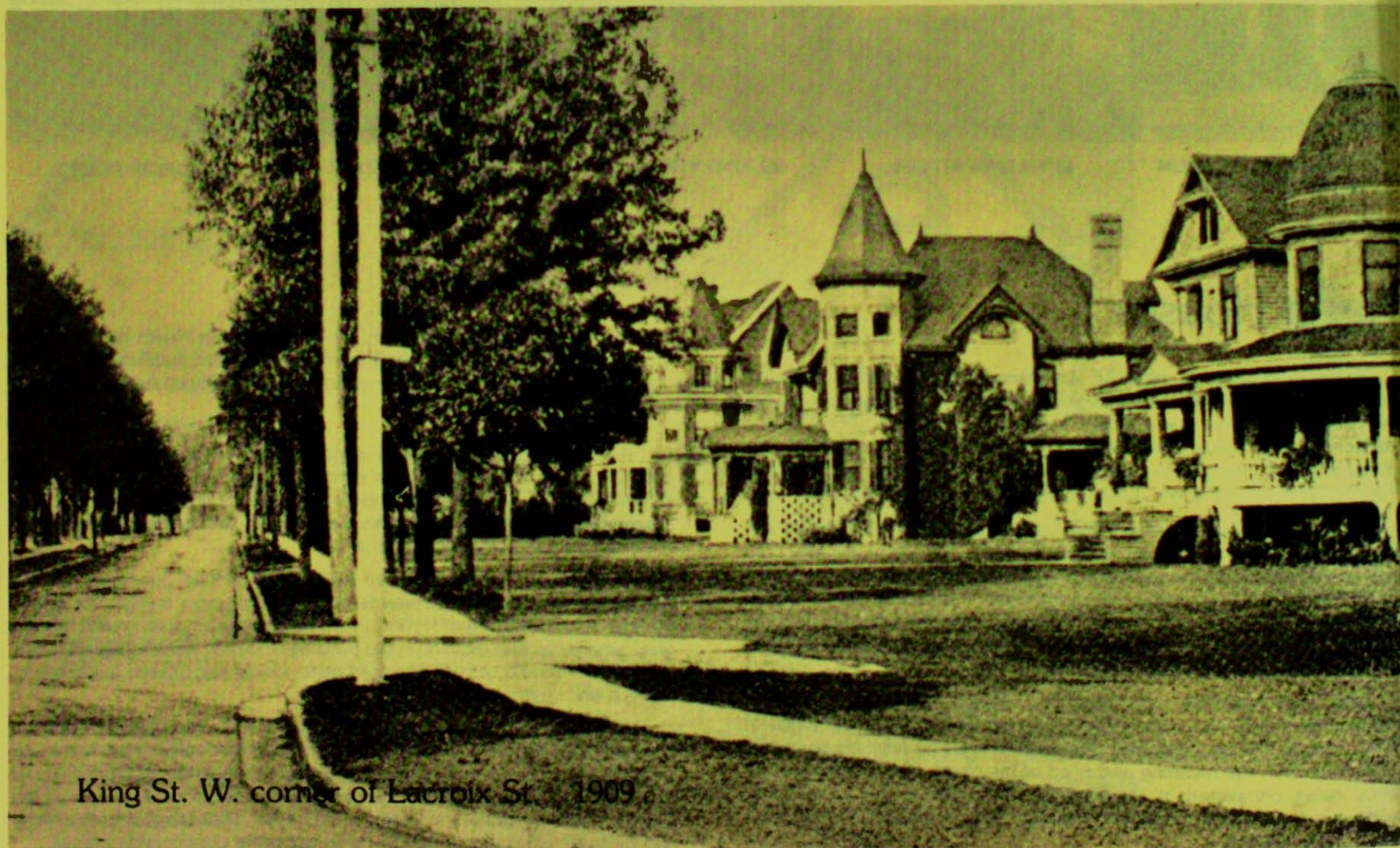
Like other Victorian architects, J.L. Wilson was trained in many architectural styles, and continually expanded his personal catalogue of design themes. He would choose a particular style he felt was poetically appropriate with the meaning and need of his client. This resulted in his library being completed in the Beaux Arts tradition, his commercial buildings in possible Romanesque overtones, and his residential work in the Queen Anne flavour.

The Chatham-Kent Museum, 57 William Street North has copies of J.L. Wilson blueprints originally drawn on linen, which detail the home next door at 53 William Street. It is a fine example of the Queen Anne style which began in England around 1868.

A home in this architectural language is full of exciting irregularity. It extends to the floor plan, which seems to jog and break its perimeters without reason. The overall massing of the building appears as an assemblage of cylinders and blocks, and an irregular variety of colours and textures are used to adorn its exterior.

The earlier versions of Queen Anne used brick on the ground storey with shingles or horizontal boards covering the upper levels. The upper storeys usually projected beyond those below and windows would usually grow smaller as one moved up the buildings exterior. Small scale millwork turned or carved by steam powered lathes would also appear to change in pattern and rhythm.

A later extension of the Queen Anne style revealed a round or polygonal turret, and a continuous course of brick to side of the home. All three of these homes of our sampling are of this later era of Queen Anne. Overall, the use of turrets, gables, bay windows and porches create a high degree of complexity in the image of the house. That image is both artistic and fantastic as well as fitting to these elaborate comfortable homes.



King St. W. corner of Lacroix St. 1909

Residential

At the turn of the century, Chatham was very much a single community centred about the commercial district of King Street. Today this pattern of growth has changed slightly with modern shopping malls partially serving the expanded boundaries of the city. The extent of this new pattern of growth in Chatham is not as great as in other cities in Ontario. We are still able to see neighbourhoods relying on King Street for their commerce, Church and social life. At the same time we can see these neighbourhoods developing their own individual characters. We hope this can be detected in our quick survey of residential Chatham.

King Street wanders from downtown and connects two neighbourhoods. We shall call Chatham East and King Street West. In an urban planning sense, King Street is terminated by these two neighbourhoods and is not allowed to extend endlessly into a highway system. The first area we wish to look at is King Street West, which easily has one of the richest arrays of architectural styles in southwest Ontario. It was a wealthy neighbourhood with a good number of its early citizens prominent members of the Canada and Dominion Sugar Company, which was located close by. One could say this was Chatham's own unique area of "Sugar Baronial Architecture".

The photo on the left shows King Street paved in brick and boulevards that complete the fronts of a fine row of Queen Anne homes. It is surprising that these large homes, which were spaced on an urban scale, do not appear clustered.

The Essex-Kent Historical Atlas praises the makeup of this area. "The riverbank both above and below the business centre displays many large and highly ornate residences, bespeaking the wealth, the taste, and liberality of their residents".

This is a neighbourhood that is still closely linked with the downtown area. Its residents use the churches, offices and schools located in the core district. A short walk through this area will reveal that much of the original continuity and grandness is also prevalent.

We have chosen a handful of these homes to illustrate a few styles present in the area. It would make an interesting afternoon to compare these homes with any good book on architectural styles.



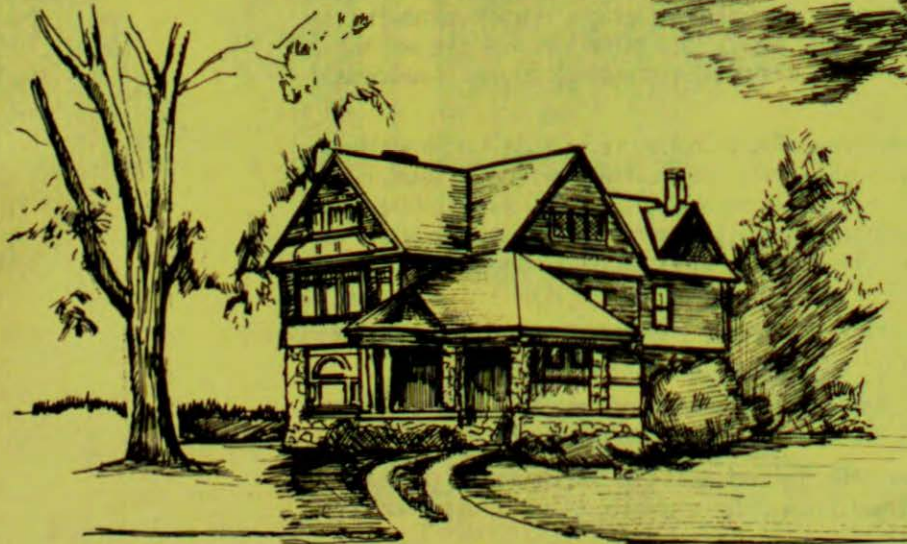
484 KING ST. W.



377 KING ST. W.



372 KING ST. W.



495 KING ST. W.



RALEIGH ST. TOWN HOUSES



419 - 423 KING ST. WEST



322 WELLINGTON ST.

King Street West

The home at 372 King Street West is a fine example of the "Stick Style". These buildings have tall proportions with steep roofs and frequently are very complex in their floor plan. The eaves which are supported by large ornate brackets, project considerably from the rest of the building. There is an extensive use of verandas with ornate diagonal bracing on the porch posts. The most characteristic feature of this style is diagonal stick work used on the wood siding of the home, which might be painted a contrasting colour to highlight it from the siding.

A good example of Carpenter Gothic is the house at 377 King Street. The universal feature of Gothic architecture is the pointed arch, however on this home it is absent. Alternatively, steep pointed gables with ginger-bread barge boards under the eaves are a common feature, and always produced with a saw. This home has excellent examples of this barge board, which creates an appearance of fragility. A trim colour of white is applied to this ginger-bread work and lightens the single colour usually painted on the siding. This house also obeys another Carpenter rule that every detached house has a veranda. It is possible the smaller portion of the house that has this veranda was added later because the roof of the taller structure breaks into two gables on the sidewall. Under those side gables there would normally be windows and a composition started for a facade on that side.

There are always exceptions to rules and the Raleigh Street town houses are just that. They are not of any particular style, but are part of the Victorian period of architecture. Early town houses are a rare breed in Chatham. This group of town houses with their bay windows on first and second floor, and dormers on the third, are a type common in more cosmopolitan centres like Toronto. Presently these Toronto buildings are the vogue of restoration companies. Their separate front entrances with small front lawns and quaint verandas make attractive living quarters. The dormers of Chatham's building give a fantastic silhouette to the roof line.

We cannot say that J. L. Wilson and Sons was the architect of the four remaining homes in this sampling, but it is clear the Queen Anne style was very popular. All four houses are various versions of this theme.

The red house at 495 King Street was built before the green and white home at 484 King Street. Both use highly textured stone on the first floor wall and then coloured shingles on the upper levels. The use of these materials shows the influence of the American designer H. H. Richardson. It was a usual practice that as the wall would break to a new storey, a band of white contrasting shingles would be applied to accent this change. At the same time, these white shingles would flare out at the buildings corners to make a mansard edge.

The homes at 419 - 423 King Street and 322 Wellington are different because brick is used on the entire wall. The house of 322 Wellington is the latest version of Queen Anne for it sports a fanciful beehive turret, both smooth and rough brick, and highly complex massing.



BRITISH METHODIST CHURCH 1910

**PHOTO AT LEFT SHOWS THE CARPENTRY AND WOOD-
WORK OF THE CHURCH'S ALTAR AND CHOIR LOFT.**

Chatham East

This neighbourhood of Chatham is filled with modest wood frame houses. Although the area may lack an astounding display of architecture, it has history that far surpasses any other neighbourhood. Each resident has a reason to be proud.

In 1833 the British House of Parliament abolished slavery in all British Dominions. Chatham became the terminal of the "Underground Railway" for fleeing slaves from the United States. Very quickly the area South of McGregor's Creek and around Princess Street was settled by those fortunate enough to escape with their lives from plantations in the south. One member of this community was the rebel John Brown, who organized an assault force in the First Baptist Church on King Street East to free fellow slaves in the States. In 1859 he was tried and executed in Virginia for leading that resistance at Harper's Ferry. This event contributed to the start of the American Civil War.

Small community churches played an important role in re-establishing the lives of many free blacks. They were an integral part of the neighbourhood and are found throughout the community. The African Methodist Episcopal Church became large enough by 1838 that the first Canadian Annual Conference was held in the parish at Chatham. Blacks from all over the region came to attend.

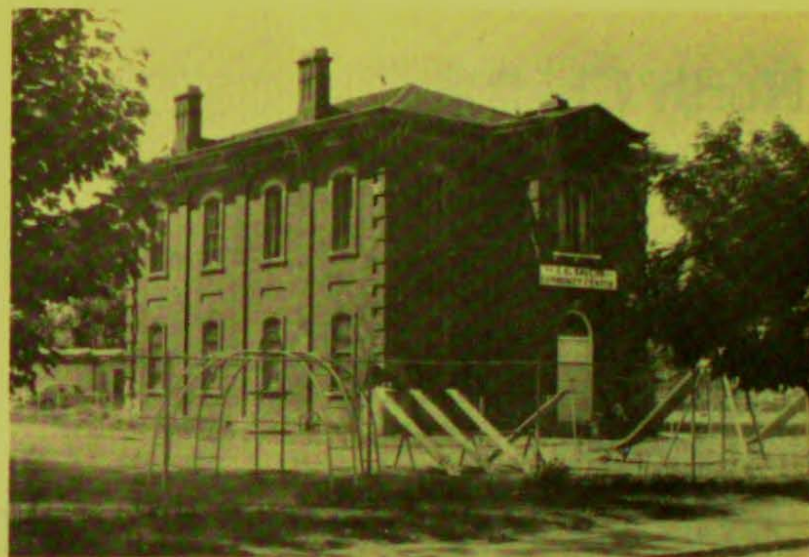
In 1856 the Canadian congregation of the A.M.E. Church was large enough to support two congregations. The first group broke away from the American A.M.E. Church to form the British Methodist Episcopal Church, and the second remained affiliated with the Americans to become the Campbell A.M.E. Church. Their 1887 Church still stands on King Street East.

The British congregation built a new building on the corner of Princess and Wellington in 1869, and named it The Victoria Chapel. Later in 1910, a new larger meeting place was built from volunteer labour and donated construction materials. It is this later building erected by Rev. J. C. Richard's congregation that is Chatham's first designated historic building. Under the Provincial Heritage Act 1974, any building or property is eligible to be designated. It should be brought to the attention of The Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee, who will then present a formal proposal to City Council.

Based on the information brought forward, councillors make the decision to designate, once it is designated, the building is eligible to receive money and expertise from the Ontario and Federal Government for its restoration.

Another important institution in Chatham East is the Woodstock Industrial Institute built in 1873 as a public school. The school went under the jurisdiction of The Board of Education in 1908. It became an industrial school teaching nickel plating, horse shoeing, dress making and music. The schools mandate clearly declared to teach Negros, Indians, all ethnic groups, and not to exclude Whites.

In 1939 the citizens of the area formed a community association naming themselves after J. G. Taylor, the head of the Board of Directors of The Woodstock Industrial School. Under the leadership of Orville Wright, the community group canvassed the city for funds to build an olympic size pool next to the old industrial school. Today that pool stands as a symbol of the dedication and conviction of that neighbourhood. Residents are now in the process of restoring the Woodstock building to accompany the new pool.



J. G. TAYLOR COMMUNITY CENTRE 1873

North Chatham

This whole district on the north bank of the Thames River, developed later than the King Street neighbourhood system in the South. This gave planners the opportunity to make this new neighbourhood something uniquely different.

Victoria Avenue became the promenade street of the city. With more than enough land afforded to each lot, large gardens and lush orchards dotted the streetscape. The Essex-Kent Historical Atlas colourfully described the street as follows:

"The aristocratic quarter of Victoria Avenue, North Chatham, whose width of one hundred feet, adorned with double rows of maple boulevards, and excellent order of architecture displayed in its dwellings, give it rank among the handsomest streets of its kind found in Canada.

Just recently a representative from the Provincial Ministry of natural Resources, reported that the pair of Chinese Ginkgo trees in front of the manse of Blessed Sacrament Church were the largest and some of the oldest of that species of tree in North America. Each year property owners shudder when they hear the howls of the wind. It could be the end of one of their grand old trees. Although storms have taken their toll, residents have replanted this shady canopy to maintain this street's stately grandeur.

The North side neighbourhood has its collection of community churches and schools. They are planted within the residential development in a similar manner as in Chatham East.

In 1896, a year after T. J. Rutley's Central School opened downtown, McKeough public school was erected on Forest Street. J. L. Wilson was probably the architect. It has very similar detailing and use of exterior materials seen in many of his designs.

With this northward view of Victoria Avenue we feel it is an appropriate point at which to end our book. We have skipped over lightly, a major portion of Chatham's architectural highlights and her history. We have tried to give you a new way of looking at what we are through what we build - a way that gives meaning and context to our community. With the new information we have given you, go and experience our city. Look favourably to the town scape we have, but also look positively to what has yet to be done.

We cannot ignore our past as we move gallantly into the future. It gives us a perspective of who we are and what we are. A future that is sensitive to history gives us a culture and a city life that is strong and vibrant. It should give us pride and identity. To restore, recycle and maintain older structures is a sign of commitment and affirmation that we possess a sensitive future. To decide what is saved, requires the concern and conscious effort of every citizen in the city.



McKEOUGH PUBLIC SCHOOL 1896



Looking South on Victoria Avenue

Acknowledgements

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