

Stimers Building
(now W&R Greenley Booksellers)
258 Front St.

A stone house with shutter hooks on the windows, in the basement of a Front Street building? Indeed! That is exactly what can be seen in the basement of the new Greenley Book Store, plus a cooking fireplace and possibly evidence of a commercial bake oven.

The present three storey brick facade is a dressing for a building that started as a two storey stone structure before 1830. It was probably built by Abraham Stimers, an innkeeper, after he bought land on the west side of Front Street from Thomas Coleman in 1824.

On the main level was found, during present renovations, a tall window set into the north stone wall, with wide panelled reveals and heavy wooden shutters. The crude split lathe and plaster on this wall are of that early era. This old building had a kitchen in the basement which looked out toward the river at ground level. Still there, is the cooking fireplace of brick with iron loops for the crane.

Also before 1830, a dwelling was added. This little house has nicely framed sash windows with wooden reveals and brown painted simple trim with the hooks still in place for shutters.

Across along passageway, also in the basement, on the south side, is the stone arch of a fireplace or bake oven — maybe a commercial oven, for it once had its own one storey stone building as shown on the early Goad maps.

Stimers sold his property to the Hon. Peter McGill, an absentee owner in Montreal. Possibly Henry Corby rented these buildings when he and his wife, Alma, arrived in Belleville from England in 1832. He opened a grocery store and soon after, he started a bakery in connection with the shop. He had apprenticed as a baker before coming to Canada.

Henry Corby's business prospered and in 1840 he bought the property from McGill and the land behind the Front Street store from Thomas Coleman. According to the deed of sale, Coleman reserved "16 feet of land in the lowest part of the ravine, the full width of the lot, for the purpose of continuing a canal from the tail race of the said Coleman's Mills and the free passage of boats to and from the same when so constructed."

In January 1850, Corby leased his bakery and the attached dwelling "which he had lately occupied," to Philip Hambly who took over the bakery business. By this time Corby had bought land for a home on the north east corner of George and Bridge Streets, and later Mills in the present Corbyville which he expanded to include a distillery in 1859.

He sold his Front Street property to Hambly in 1863. Hambly's son added a third storey in stone after 1883 but lost it all to creditors in 1886.

Joseph Caldwell, dentist, bought the building in the fall of 1891. By spring, notices in the newspaper would suggest that the brick facade was added at that time. It was referred to as the "New Caldwell Block".

The building will be remembered best as the Quick and Robertson Clothing Store, established here in 1898.

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