

# INDUSTRY

Beardmore Tanneries, Acton, Ont.



BEARDMORE AND Co. has played a prominent part in Acton's industrial life, with tanning the second industry here after the mill. This view of the plant was taken about 50 years ago.

The Acton Tanning Co. Acton



ACTON TANNING COMPANY was pictured on this postcard. The company was established in 1844.

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W.H. STOREY AND Son glove manufacturers employed hundreds over its years of operation here since 1868. It's a pre-centennial industry, and Acton's third. This building was built about 1880. The first electrically-lighted sign in town

was erected on its roof, 100 feet long, reflecting in Hender son's Pond and plainly seen by those passing through on the train. H. T. Arnold and Sons took over the building. It was razed to make room for the new postoffice.

## Tanning second industry in 1844

By 1874 the tanneries were long established here having started in 1844. Tanning is the second oldest industry in Acton, following the traditional mill. The Adams family first secured mill privileges in 1818. There had, by 1874, already been a tannery operate and go out of business, owned by John Zimmerman and William Bemstreet. It was north of the tracks. The tannery started by Dr. McGarvin and Charles

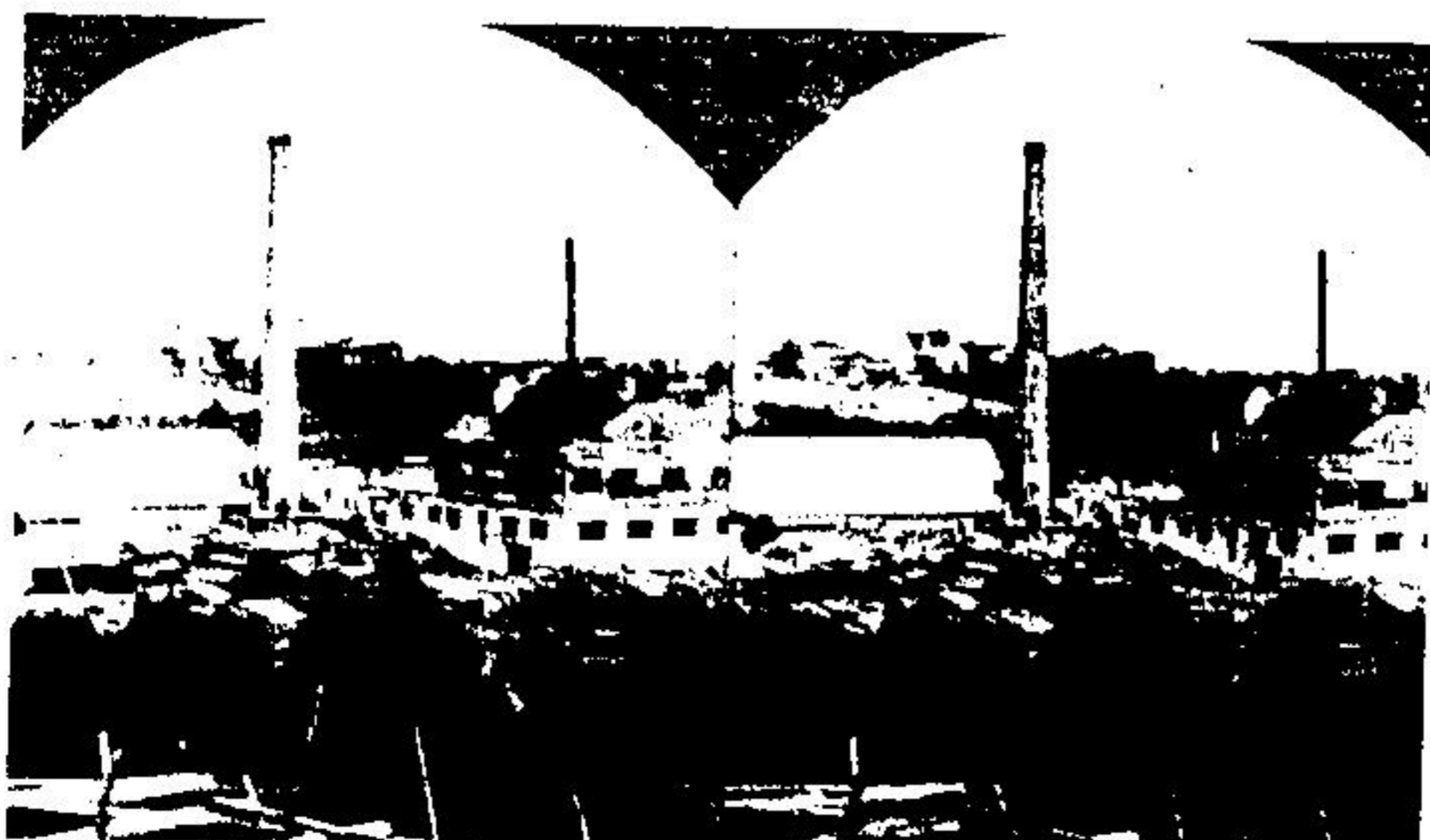
Sidney Smith in the 1860's was taken over by Canada Glove Works, but later discontinued. The first tannery at the Beardmore site was built in 1842 by N. Nellis, it burned down in 1852 and was rebuilt by Mr. McKay, who sold to Acheson, McGloshen and Co. In 1865 George L. Beardmore became the proprietor. He improved it but it was again destroyed by fire in 1872, to be rebuilt the same year.

In 1873, harness and shoe leathers are being made as well as sole leather. The process was slow, requiring from six months to a year to tan and finish the leather. Hemlock bark was used in great quantities and every hemlock tree cut down in the district furnished bark for the tannery. Farmers teamed it in all winter long from as far as Erin and Eramosa and even Garafraxa. Sometimes 20 or 30 teams and sleighloads would arrive in line to unload

and receive \$3 or \$4 a cord. Eventually bark was brought in by train at greater expense, and for a while the tannery moved to Bracebridge to be near a greater source of supply. A century ago talk was of a new single handler plow, which was invented here and was to become known Canada wide. The Stephenson Plow, which is to be manufactured

on a large scale by the Acton Plow Company organized in 1873, is well known in this vicinity having been invented and patented by Mr. Wm. Stephenson of this place, and manufactured for several years past. It is now perhaps the most complete and most desirable of any plow ever introduced into Canada. The old woollen mill was torn down in 1873 to accommodate the Acton Plow Company. They were located about where the Free Press is now, on the stream. Shareholders were Sidney Smith, Dr. McGarvin, Eli Snyder and others.

Change village. The big plans of the Plow Company changed the face of the town, extending Willow and opening River St., and deviating the course of the trout stream. But the investors counted their chickens before they were hatched, and the company went into receivers' hands a few years after the plow had been so widely acclaimed. The factory burned down along with Ebbage's planing mill in one of the village's many frightening blazes. Storey's. W. H. Storey's glove factory employed 30, and was a source of pride to Acton for many years. Teaming. Acton was the centre of a flourishing lumber business. Grain had for years been teamed to the lakefront. With the hauling of wood for the GTR engines and hemlock bark to the tanneries, there could be 40 teams a day in the village. The teamsters kept the hotels busy. Had a dream. In 1871 an enterprising young man George Forbes, who was engineer and fireman at Moore's shingle mill, had a dream. He spent all his spare time constructing a perambulatory photograph car to tour the country taking elegant family portraits. George was the village tax collector that year, too. But his hopes faded and he sold his car to Ransom Adams for a pig pen.



STEREOPTICAN VIEWS were delightful entertainment and local scenes were purchased for the viewers, as well as scenes and comic pictures. This picture of the tannery looked even better seen double through the stereopticon.

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