



M. Collis Building

Research Report

M. Collis Building

78, 80, 82 King Street West
Oshawa, ON

Prepared for Heritage Oshawa
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report

This report evaluates the cultural heritage significance of 78–82 King street West in the City of Oshawa in accordance with Ontario Regulation 9/06, Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest, under the Ontario Heritage Act ('the Act').

1.2 Legislative Context

Ontario Regulation 9/06 under the Ontario Heritage Act sets out the criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest, which is required in order to designate a property under the provisions of Part IV of the Act.

A property may be designated under Section 29 in Part IV of the Act if it meets one or more of the following criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

1. The property has design value or physical value because it:
 - i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method; or
 - ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit; or
 - iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.
2. The property has historical value or associative value because it:
 - i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community; or
 - ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture; or
 - iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.
3. The property has contextual value because it:
 - i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area;
or
 - ii. is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings;
or
 - iii. is a landmark.

After analyzing the history of and heritage attributed to the subject property, it is concluded that the subject property merits designation under the Ontario Heritage Act in light of criteria 1(i), 2(i), 2(iii) and 3(i).

2.0 Description of Property

2.1 Location

The property is located at 78–82 King Street West. The property is situated on the north side of King Street West in Oshawa's downtown core, west of Centre Street and east of MacMillan Drive. The property is bordered by commercial buildings at

2.2 Legal Description

The property at 78–82 King Street West is located with the southern portion of Lot 11, Concession 2. The legal description of the property is PT LT 9 N/S KING ST PL H50002 OSHAWA; PT LT 9 S/S BOND ST PL H50002 OSHAWA AS IN D407398; OSHAWA.

2.3 Site Description

Constructed in 1928, the commercial building located at 78–82 King Street West faces south towards King Street West. The building is located in Oshawa's downtown core, west of Centre Street and east of MacMillan Drive and Queen Street. Currently, the building is home to two businesses, King's Flooring Ltd. at 78 King Street West and Berry Hill Food Company at 82 King Street West.

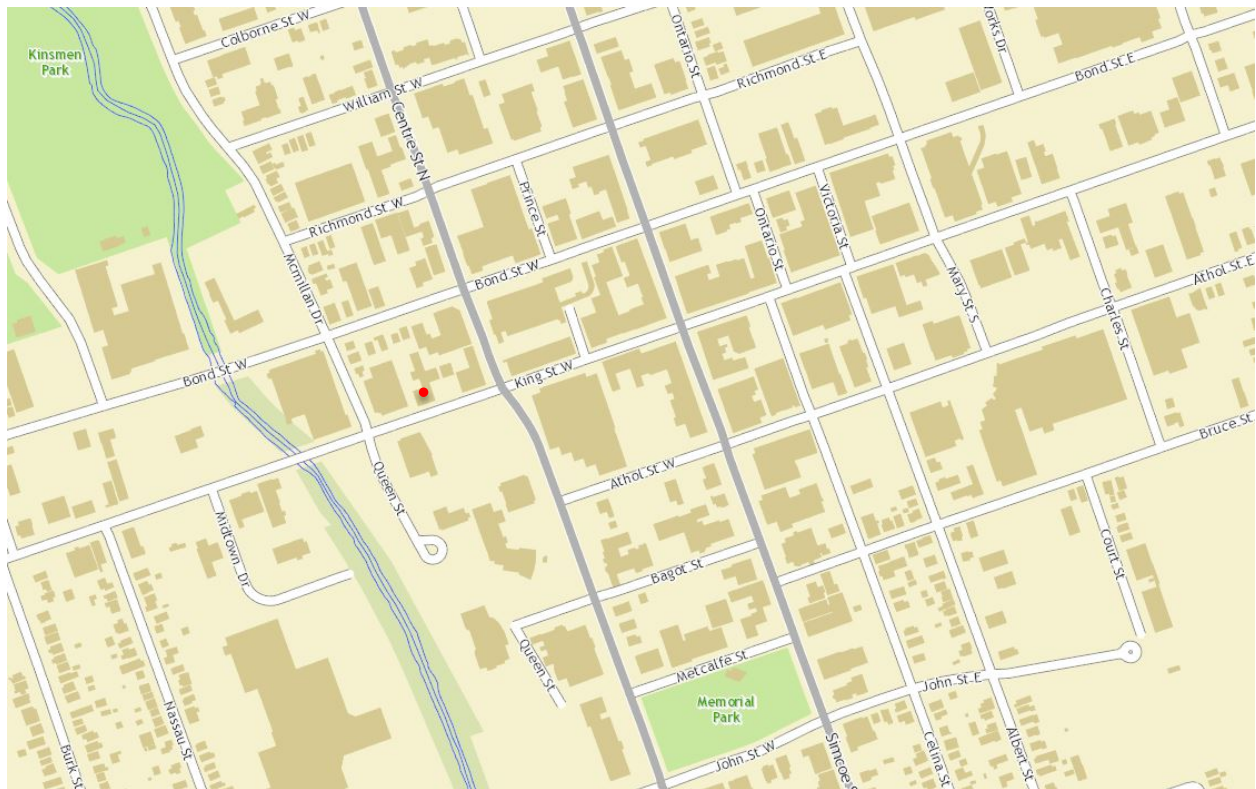


Figure 1 - Location of 78-82 King Street West. City of Oshawa GIS Map July 2019

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Summary

The building located at 78–82 King Street West was constructed in 1928. This brick one-storey structure was designed by the architect C.C. Stenhouse, who also constructed other buildings in Oshawa's downtown area during the 1920s, such as the Masonic Temple at 91 Centre Street South, and Pinewood Centre at 300 Centre Street South. King Street is one of Oshawa's principal commercial corridors in the City's downtown core.

3.2 Site History

According to land registry documentation, Lot 11, Concession 2 was patented by Mrs. Elizabeth Gray on August 10, 1798. Elizabeth Gray was a Loyalist, the wife of Colonel James Gray. Colonel James Gray had served in the British Army for over 40 years, and died in approximately 1796. After Elizabeth Gray passed, the land was inherited by her son, Robert Isaac Dey Gray.

Robert Gray was a Solicitor General of Upper Canada. In October 1804, Robert Gray attended the trial of a member of the Ojibwa tribe named Ogetonicut, who was charged with the murder of a white settler in the Newcastle District named John Sharp. Robert Gray, Ogetonicut and 18 others were aboard the 'Speedy' on Lake Ontario between October 7th and October 9th in 1804, when the ship sank off Presqu'isle Point. There were no survivors.

Gray's land, Lot 11, Concession 2, was transferred to his slave, John Baker. Subsequent owners included Jabez Lynde in 1813 and John Kerr in 1816, who owned 80.94 hectares (200 ac.) of the original Lot 11, Concession 2. In 1829, Mr. Kerr sold these 80.94 hectares (200 ac.) to James Hall, who in turn sold to John Borlese Warren in 1836.

From 1837 to 1841, J.B. Warren divided and sold the land as ¼ and ½ acre lots, selling 7 lots along King and Bond Streets in total. During this time, J.B. Warren had constructed a flour mill, located on the east side of the Oshawa Creek near King Street West, in an area known as 'The Hollow.' Warren ran this mill until 1865, after which it changed hands numerous times prior to its demolition in 1981. There is a parking garage situated in this location today.

The building, known as the "Collis Block," was originally owned by Max Collis and was constructed in 1928, as indicated by the date stone on the front façade, which reads "M. Collis Building 1928". According to the Oshawa Fire Insurance Plans from 1884, 1911 and 1921, the lot where the Collis building is located was vacant until the current building was constructed in 1928.

The Collis family ran a furniture business at 78 King Street West from 1929 until 1988. This store was known as M. Collis Furniture until it closed its doors in 1988. An ad in the Whitby Free Press, October 3 1984 edition indicates that M. Collis Furniture at 78 King Street West was owned and operated by M & G Collis Furniture (Oshawa) Ltd.

3.3 Owners

Residing in Orillia, Ontario in 1921, according to the 1921 census, Max Collis (then 38) and his wife Dora (then 36) lived with their six children Morris (then 15), Bessie (then 9), Zelda (then 7), Sarah (then 7), Elsie (then 5) and Abraham (then 3). They moved to Oshawa in the mid-1920s, the exact year is not known. In 1928, Max Collis ran a second-hand goods store located at 8 Church Street, now Centre Street, in Oshawa; his son Morris worked there as well. According to the 1929 Vernon's Directory, Max worked at M. Collis Furniture and resided at 88 Church Street with his family. His son, Morris, ran the second-hand goods store located at 8 Church Street.

The original owner of the building at 78–82 King Street West was Max Collis. According to the 1929 Vernon's Directories, Max Collis operated a furniture business, known as M. Collis Furniture at 7880 King Street West. The M. Collis Furniture Company was in business from approximately 1929 until 1988, almost 60 years. A receipt from 1953 (see Figure 9) indicates that the furniture business operated out of 78, 80 and 82 King Street West. This receipt also indicates that there was another M. Collis Furniture Company located in Port Hope on Walton Street.

The Collis family was a prolific business family in Oshawa. Max Collis's brother Isaac Collis owned another business in Oshawa, a clothing store named I. Collis and Sons, also located on King Street at 52 King Street West (see Figure 10). Isaac's sons Samuel and Mac Collis also worked at the store, and his daughter Ann Collis was a clerk.

According to the 1921 census, Isaac Collis immigrated to Canada from Russia in 1901. He was married to wife Yetto, with whom he had three sons; Samual (then 19), Mac (then 13) and Dennis (then 9) and two daughters; Eva (then 17) and Annie (then 11). The family resided at 52 King Street West, above their clothing store. The building at 52 King Street West has since been demolished, and the lot now forms part of 40 King Street West, which is a large office building.

As of the 1940 Vernon's Directories, Max Collis and Isaac Collis continued to run their respective stores, and Isaac's son Samual Collis owned and operated a clothing store at 28–30 Simcoe Street North named S. B Collis.

The Collis family is connected to the Wilson family, owners of Wilson Furniture, a long-standing furniture business in Downtown Oshawa, celebrating 85 years in operation in 2019. Eva Collis, daughter of Isaac Collis, married Ed Wilson who opened Wilson Furniture in 1934. According to the 1926 Vernon's Directories, Eva Collis worked at I. Collis and Sons with her father.

After M. Collis Furniture closed in 1988, King's Flooring and Drapes moved into its location shortly afterward, and continue to operate out of 78 King Street West today as King's Flooring Limited. A popular café and caterer, Berry Hill Food Company, is currently located at 80 and 82 King Street West.

4.0 Structural Design and Architecture

4.1 Date of Construction

The Collis building is a one-storey, red brick and stucco building constructed in 1928. The architect was C.C. Stenhouse and noted local contractors such as Pedlar People Ltd. and W. E. Phillips Co. Ltd. were amongst the various contractors hired to complete the construction of the exterior and interior of the M. Collis Building.

4.2 Form and Design

The design of the M. Collis Building echoes that of commercial buildings erected during the pre-World War I boom years in Oshawa and elsewhere. Prominently situated on the north side of King Street West in Oshawa's downtown business core, the M. Collis Building is a fine example of 1920s commercial architecture.

The first decades of the 20th century saw the growing use of decorative transom lights (often using small prismatic glass panes) above front display windows. Electric incandescent lights enabled storeowners to call attention to their entrance and display windows, and permitted nighttime shopping.

In the 1920s and 1930s a variety of new materials were introduced into the building's storefront, including aluminum and stainless steel framing elements, pigmented structural glass in a wide variety of colors, tinted and mirrored glass, and glass block.

The M. Collis Building contains examples of modern design materials in the large front window displays, which are separated by decorative pilasters, clad in a blue grey stucco with large modern transom lights across front façade. The building features a wide front façade accommodating three storefronts, two with recessed entryways, with a simple cornice, stucco sign band that contains a date stone with the building name and date surmounted by a simple parapet. It reads, "1928 M. Collis Bldg."



Figure 2 - Tin ceiling tiles made and installed by Pedlar People Ltd., of Oshawa. These ceiling tiles are located in both stores and are original to the building. This represents one of the few examples of these tiles still in place.

The Oshawa Daily Times Gazette reported in its August 22, 1928 edition:

“(W)ork is rapidly advancing on the new Collis Block, King Street West, where within the next month three fine new stores will open to constitute another addition to Oshawa’s rapidly growing business section...one store, that to the extreme west, is expected to be ready for M. Collis, the owner of the building, to occupy by September 1.”

The general contractor was A.E. Eagleson and the sub-contractors were noted as:

- W.E. Phillips Company Limited, who would have created the decorative glass in the transom lights along the front window openings.
- Pedlar People Limited, who locally made the decorative metal ceiling in the building units (see Figure 3). The Pedlar People Limited was a metal stamping company located in the heart of Oshawa’s downtown, where Memorial Park is today at 110 Simcoe Street South.
- Other contractors included Gordon Annis (Plumber, Heating and Sanitary Engineer), Ernest Parker (Electrician), Harry Hazel, Cunliff and Sons, and Norman Brown.

Two commercial units in the building are 15 feet 9 inches wide by 32 feet deep, while the third is 26 feet wide by 82 feet deep. The building currently contains two stores; Berry Hill is located in the larger store section of the building in 80, 82 King Street West, King’s Flooring is located at 78 King Street West. The stores are spacious and well lit. The building was originally constructed to permit a second-storey addition for apartments or offices.

4.3 Architect

In 1917, C.C. Stenhouse moved to Oshawa and established himself as an architect and engineer. Stenhouse became involved in curling, bowling and the Rotary Club in Oshawa. He was a mason and became the Worthy Master of the Masonic Temple. In 1930, he was elected Grand Superintendent of the Ontario District Number 10. One of the first buildings that Stenhouse designed was the Alger Building on King Street East in Oshawa for the brothers Ewart and Stewart Alger.

Stenhouse has designed various commercial buildings and homes in Oshawa, including the Masonic Temple at 91 Centre Street South in 1928, the Albert Street United Church, originally located at the southwest corner of Albert Street and Olive Avenue in 1929, the Children’s Shelter (Pinewood Centre) at 300 Centre Street South in 1929. In 1932, he received the Signal Honour from the Architectural Institute of Canada for his design of the Masonic Temple. His design came second to the Montreal Masonic Temple.

5.0 Applicability of Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*

In light of the findings of this report, it is concluded that the property located at 78–82 King Street West meets the criteria outlined in Ontario Regulation 9/06 under the Ontario Heritage Act. The property meets the criteria for designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under the three categories of 1. Design or Physical Value, 2. Historical/Associative Value, and 3. Contextual Value.

1. (i) This property has design and physical value as it is representative of commercial buildings erected during the pre–World War I boom years and is a reminder of what Oshawa’s downtown commercial district once resembled.
2. (i) This property has historical value as it is the original location of M. Collis Furniture, a longstanding business in Oshawa, in business for nearly 60 years from 1929 to 1988.
2. (i) This property has historical value as it is connected to the Collis family, a prolific business family in Oshawa.
2. (iii) This property reflects the work of architect C.C. Stenhouse, a designer significant to the Oshawa community, and architect of the award-winning Masonic Temple, Pinewood Centre, and Albert Street United Church.
3. (i) This property has contextual value because 78–82 King Street West is important in defining, maintaining and supporting the area in which it stands as one of the early buildings constructed on King Street West, Oshawa’s principal east–west commercial corridor in the downtown core.

6.0 Resources

Blumenson, John. *Ontario Architecture: A Guide to Styles and Building Terms 1784 to the Present*. Toronto 1990

Bouckley, Thomas. *Pictorial Oshawa Volumes 1–3*. Oshawa: The Alger Press Ltd., 1976.

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Insurance Plan of Oshawa, Ontario. 1884, 1911, 1921, 1938

New Collis Block is Well Advanced. *Oshawa Daily Times*. August 22, 1928.

“Oshawa Illustrated.” Oshawa: The Reformer Printing and Publishing Company, Ltd. 1911

Pedlar Papers. Oshawa Archives

Vernon’s City of Oshawa Directory, 1921–1990

www.ontarioarchitecture.com

7.0 Current Photographs of the Property



Figure 3 - 78, 80, 82 King Street West, Oshawa. South Facade, September 2019



Figure 4 - 78, 80, 82 King Street West, Oshawa. South-West Facade, September 2019



Figure 5 - 78, 80, 82 King Street West, Date Stone. September 2019



Figure 6 - 78, 80, 82 King Street West, Oshawa. East Facade, September 2019

8.0 Historical Photographs and Advertisements



Figure 7 - M. Collis Furniture Ad from 1984, Oshawa Times

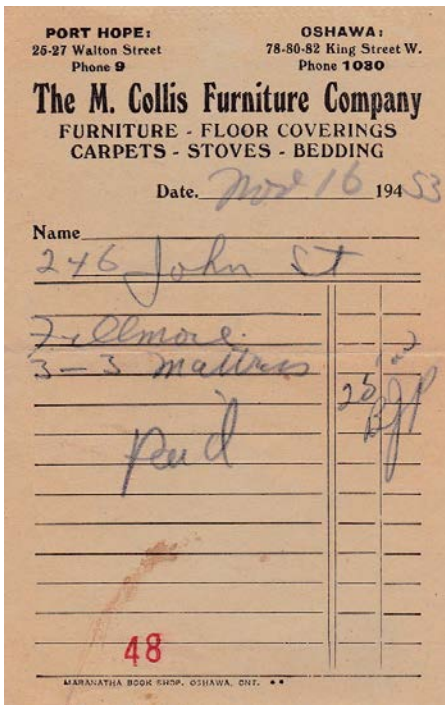


Figure 8 - Receipt from The M. Collis Furniture Company, 1953.



Figure 9 - I. Collis and Sons, Clothing Store located at 50-54 King Street West, Oshawa. Another Collis Family business located in downtown Oshawa. Circa 1929