



Heritage Property – Seagram Bonded Warehouse



57 Erb St. W.

Built by Hespeler, Randall and Roos, c. 1878

Designated – exterior (three facades) interior (racking system) November 2002: bylaw 02-154, “Seagram Bonded Warehouse”

Nineteenth-century Waterloo was surrounded by highly fertile grain fields. A natural by-product of a grain miller’s activity was the fermentation of those grains into beer and the distillation of that beer into whisky. A succession of millers soon made the village and town of Waterloo into one of the most productive centres for alcohol production in the province.

Founded by William Hespeler and George Randall in the year in which Waterloo was incorporated as a village in 1857, the works that consisted originally of Granite Mills and its subsidiary, the Waterloo Distillery, gradually passed into the hands of the husband of Hespeler’s niece, Stephanie Urbs, whom Joseph E. Seagram had married in 1869.

By 1883, Seagram had bought out the last of his partners, William Roos — Randall’s brother-in-law. For the quantity and quality of its product, Seagram’s plant soon afterwards became the foremost distillery in Canada. The bonded warehouse at the corner of Erb and Caroline streets was built to store 6,000 to 7,000 oak barrels of whisky during the aging process.



The yellow-brick warehouse dates from the days of Hespeler, Randall and Roos. The east-west ridge of its shallow-sloped gable roof aligns with the flow of ventilation directed through shuttered windows on only the east and west faces of the warehouse. Broad doorways in the middle of those two walls allowed entry of heavy-hand trucks. The windows are set in segmentally arched wooden frames within similar brick openings. The building's corners are strengthened with brick pilasters.

The northeast corner of the building was later cut off and rebuilt at the precise angle that allowed the tracks of the carrier that Seagram preferred, the Grand River Railway, to pass beside those of the Grand Trunk railway.

The building was at one time full of timber racks onto which barrels could be hoisted, rolled along for efficient storage and periodically accessed for testing. A number of those racks, preserved and part of the building's heritage designation, can be seen in the entrance foyer.

