

## A History of Artistry

The **Macdonald Manufacturing Company** is widely held to be the first and finest manufacturer of lithography on tinware in Canada. The rooms and corridors of what is now 401 Richmond Street West once echoed with the hum of industry — gears turned and hammers rang. Several times a day the big steam whistle would blast, announcing starting times and quitting times, and every hour at the hour it kept the whole community in check. Deliveries were made by a one-horse wagon four times daily, distributing top-quality wares to Toronto and beyond.

David Macdonald originally opened the Macdonald Manufacturing Company at 245 King Street East in 1884, but as business flourished, it moved to the Old Upper Canada College Buildings at the North-West corner of King and Simcoe streets. A surgical artist by trade, David Macdonald was encouraged in his ambitions by Sir John A. Macdonald (no blood relation), who promised him tariff protection in the interests of expanding trade across Canada, and by Major Tassie who provided financial assistance.

In 1899, the Macdonald Manufacturing building erupted in flames, believed to

be caused by the spontaneous combustion of used wiping rags in the lithography department. The company temporarily relocated to its original home as construction began on a new building, erected on the rear lots at the corner of Queen and Spadina.

### THE BUILDING

The construction of what would become 401 Richmond Street West occurred in several stages between 1899 and 1923. The old MacLean Homestead was acquired near Queen and Spadina (then called Brock), along with surrounding property, and work began in 1899.

The earliest portion of the building was raised between 1899 and 1900. This building, known as Building #1, was originally two storeys. The basement was dug out by pick, shovel and wheelbarrow. In 1903, the third storey was added. The building had a different address then: “Catharine Street near Brock”, since the original entrance was from Catharine Street, a short street which ran into the property from Peter Street. The original building was just 240 feet long and 60 feet wide.

To accommodate increased production and

the transition from handwork to heavy machinery, construction on a second building began in 1904, coinciding with the extension of Catharine Street to Spadina. The street name then changed from Catharine to Richmond Street. This building, known later as Building #3, was completed in 1905\*. The shipping room was moved to this new space, and Richmond Street was paved, right to the edge of the building, making it much easier for the horse-and-carriages to haul deliveries to and from its doors (remarkably, the south side of Richmond Street West beside 401 remained without a sidewalk until 2010!). Special permission was obtained to use the address 145 Spadina, as the building was the closest on the block to the street itself. Later, when Spadina Avenue was filled in with other buildings, the building acquired the address it has today: 401 Richmond Street West.

In 1907, construction on a third building began, designed to connect Buildings #1 and #3, known as Building #2. The coach house on the south west corner, as well as the central connection hallways, were also built during this time.

As business continued to increase, an extension was added onto Building #3 in 1913, known as Building #4. Around this same time, galvanized iron canopies were built to protect deliveries against bad weather, which were removed in more recent history.

In 1923, the final extension was added to 401 Richmond Street West, the easternmost section, about 100 feet long, with an “L” shape extension of about 35 feet. This building was the strongest of all 5 buildings, and came to house much of the heavy machinery. This building came to be known as Building #5.

### DAVID MACDONALD

“David Macdonald was a surgical artist with the Marshall Academy in Aberdeen Scotland. He sketched and painted parts of the human body for use in text books and training doctors. This was before there was photography.

He was born [in] Scotland in 1837 and travelled to Canada in 1870. ...He spent some time in...various parts of the United States as depicted by his paintings. He was married in Buffalo...and was 30 years older than his wife. [The two] had a son and daughter.

[David’s] son died in an accident on the Welland Canal in the summer of 1920... His wife died in September 1920 at the age of 53 [and] David Macdonald died on April 4, 1921 at the age of 84 in the Toronto General Hospital. He had lived and owned the home at 651

Crawford Street since 1910 [which] was left to [his] daughter Marion Christina Shaw, the wife of John H. Shaw...

Mrs. Shaw recalls the gramophone given to David by Thomas Edison... At a cabin on Trout Lake near North Bay, David used to take the gramophone to the edge of the lake and play music for all in the area to hear...

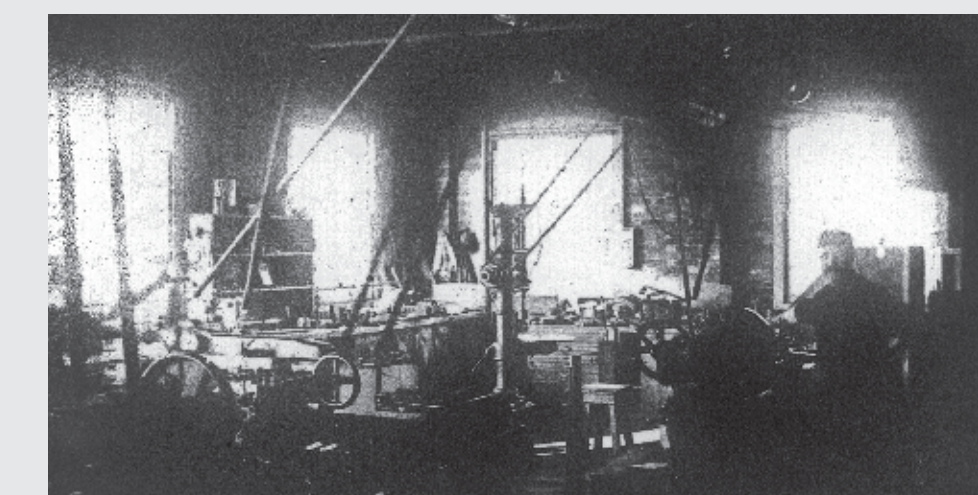
Among his many friends was the Group of Seven, the famous Canadian painters, and Gregory Clark was a frequent visitor to his home...

He painted many pictures and was never unoccupied. If he could not travel to paint he would find something to form a subject and he made a living painting after retiring from his business in 1901.”

Excerpts from an unknown author. Document provided by Donald Moffett, former employee of Continental Can Company of Canada, Plant 90.



An interior view of the first floor offices at Macdonald Manufacturing Company, c. 1920s. From the 401 Richmond Collections.



Interior view of Macdonald Manufacturing Company, c. early 1900s. From the 401 Richmond Collections.

\*There is some debate about which building came first, #2 or #3. Personal historical accounts indicate #3 came first, but historical maps suggest there was a small building on the west side of Building #1 by 1903, before construction began on Building #3.

No record of an architect can be found for 401 Richmond but the likely designer was Gregg + Gregg, a firm responsible for the design of a factory on King Street West in 1903 with conventional heavy timber framing. The brickwork is simple: regular running with Flemish headers and segmental masonry arches. The only listing found for the building’s contractor is Cooper and Brown who were awarded an \$18,000 addition in 1912.





**LOFTUS L. LLOYD**

Born in Warsaw, Ontario in 1884, to Isabella and Walter Lloyd, Loftus Learoy Lloyd worked at 401 Richmond for several decades before retiring in 1950. At the turn of the century, the young Loftus Lloyd was employed as an office boy for Macdonald Manufacturing, and could be found in the building carrying messages, delivering city mail, and typing letters for a weekly wage of \$4. By 1914, Loftus Lloyd had been made Assistant Manager of the Macdonald plant, and he went on to become Plant Manager after the transition to Continental Can Company in 1944.

In 1976, Lloyd wrote a history of the Macdonald Manufacturing Company. Published in

1993, the manuscript was edited and arranged by his son R. Douglas Lloyd. Many of the details surrounding the early history of 401 Richmond are taken from Lloyd’s accounts of his time here. Loftus L. Lloyd died in 1982.

Some years ago, Lesley Soden reached out to Loftus Lloyd’s son, Douglas, who met with us and shared old memories of 401 Richmond and recounted his parent’s dinner conversations about the building through the 1920’s, 30’s and 40’s. Compiling his father’s book was a labour of love for R. Douglas Lloyd, and he was grateful for our interest.

◀ Left: Loftus L. Lloyd. From the 401 Richmond Collections.

▲ Above: Macdonald Mfg Co Ltd., Eighteenth Annual Outting, Queenston Hights, July 16, 1919 [sic]. From the 401 Richmond Collections.



# Under New Management

**After the fire in 1899**, great financial strain pushed David Macdonald and his supporter, Major Tassie, to sell the Macdonald Manufacturing Company.

As early as 1901, David Macdonald was considering retirement, and was ready to sell Macdonald Manufacturing. Brothers Edward and W.A. Kemp, owners of Kemps Manufacturing Company, were the top contenders. Major Tassie, however, was reluctant for unknown reasons. Mr. W.A. Kemp was so

eager to acquire the business, he arranged with a Mr. Stone of the Toronto Lithography Company to purchase Macdonald Manufacturing. Mr. Stone did so, held title for a few weeks, and in March 1901, promptly turned around and sold to the Kemp brothers.

Upon David Macdonald’s

retirement, the Kemps changed the name to the Macdonald Manufacturing Company Ltd.

The company now had about 250 employees. Even as the business grew, this number did not increase. The change from all hand-work to machinery work, including some semi-automatic equipment, permitted increased production.



W.A. Kemp



A.E. Kemp



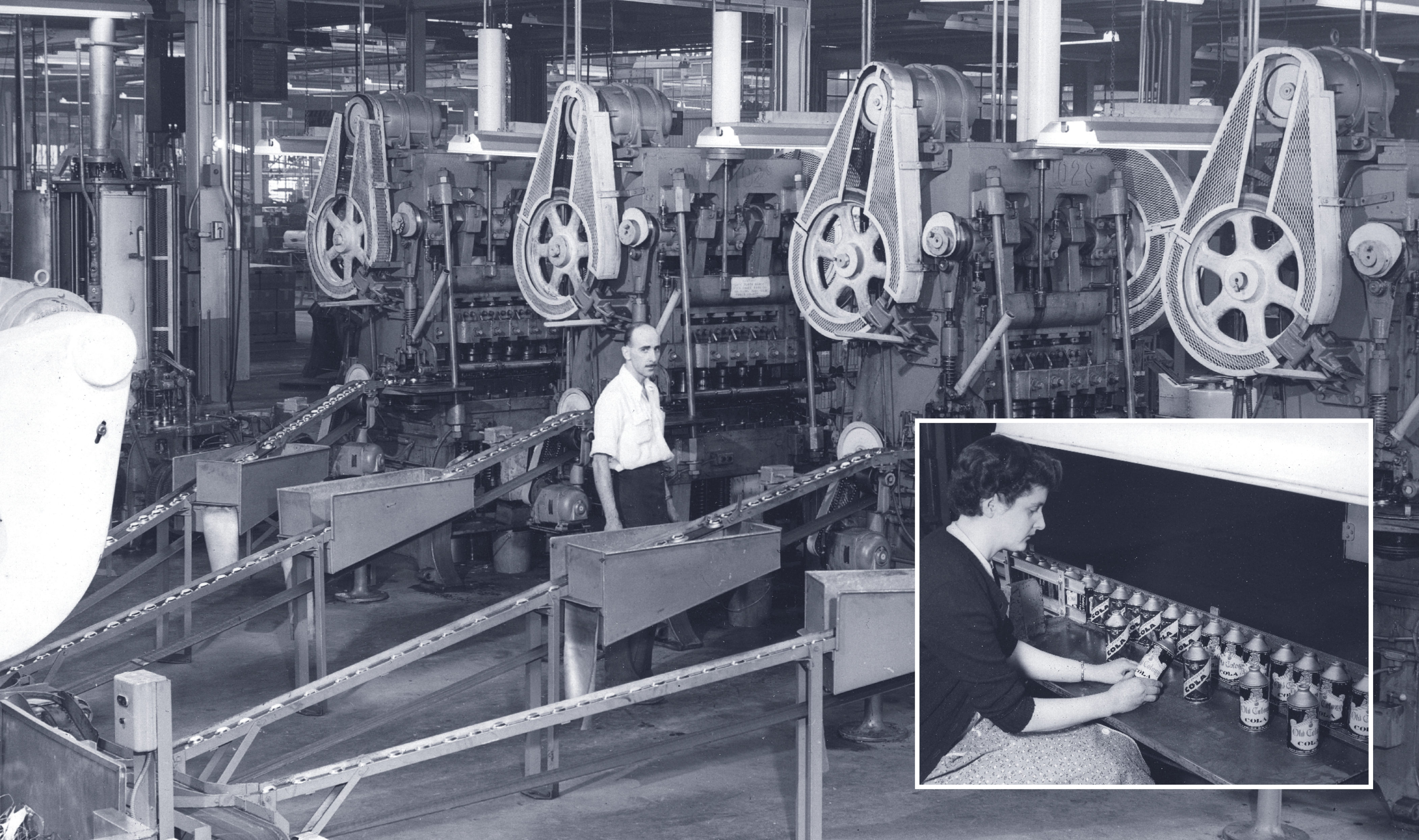
Former employees, c. early 1900s. From the 401 Richmond Collections.

Employees worked nine hours a day, six days a week with no annual holiday for factory employees; there were 22 different trades represented on staff. The company did all its own maintenance work, ensuring employees were provided steady work with no lay-offs.

“**George Bromley**, driver of a [company] horse and wagon, was the first to enlist [in WWI]. He was wounded at the battle of Vimy Ridge, but continued in the Artillery until the end of the war. By that time, the wagons had been replaced by auto trucks. On his return, George went on as a helper, and graduated to be our best driver, accident free.”

Excerpt from *History of the Macdonald Manufacturing Company*, by Loftus L. Lloyd, 1993.





## Plant 90

The stock market crash of 1929 set in motion a series of events that prompted the sale of the Macdonald Manufacturing Company to the **Continental Can Company of Canada** in 1944.

In 1927, a new company was formed called General Steel Wares Company, Ltd. (GSW). It consolidated the various parts of the Kemp holdings, then called Sheet Metal Products Ltd. (SMP). Macdonald Manufacturing Company Ltd., being part of SMP, became a branch of General

Steel Wares, although Macdonald Manufacturing retained its name for business purposes. In 1929 when the stock market crashed, GSW took a big hit. The Macdonald Manufacturing Company survived the depression years with hard work and unpaid overtime, but recovery was difficult.

According to R. Douglas Lloyd:

*“General Steel Wares Company, Ltd., very nearly went into receivership to the Bank of Commerce. The fact that it did not was almost entirely due to the consistent profitability of its subsidiary, Macdonald Manufacturing Company. The value of GSW shares was at a very low level. A man from Montreal by the name of Newman, if my memory serves me correctly, bought up sufficient GSW shares to gain control of the company. (...) Mr. Newman negotiated the sale of the ‘can’ portion of the business – namely Macdonald’s and a part of the Montreal operation – to Continental Can Company. Using the funds obtained in the sale, Mr. Newman then paid off a sizeable amount of the GSW indebt-*

*edness. As a result, there was a big jump in the value of GSW shares. Newman took advantage of this opportunity and sold out, leaving GSW a much weaker company. (...) There was however a special arrangement made for Macdonald employees as part of the sale package – that Continental was to assume responsibility for them upon retirement.”*

In 1944, The Continental Can Company of Canada, the Canadian division of one of North America’s leading metal can makers for much of the 20th century, took over the Macdonald Manufacturing Company. Loftus L. Lloyd, then Assistant Manager of the Macdonald plant, was promoted to Plant Manager, and 401 Richmond became known as Plant 90.

### CONTINENTAL CAN

The transition to Continental Can brought a number of changes to the Macdonald Plant. The shift to a large, international organization meant many of the smaller clients that Macdonald had serviced were pushed out in favour of bigger, more profitable accounts.

Over the years, work in Plant 90 was increasingly shifted to machine to accommodate the larger orders, and new techniques were developed. Plant 90 was the first in Canada to produce a metal container lithographed by the four-colour process—a cake tin with a flower design photographed in

colour from a bouquet of flowers.

Major change also came in the form of increased pressure on former Macdonald employees to join the union which represented the factory workers at other Continental plants. Within a short time after the takeover, an impasse arose between the union and Continental, resulting in a bitter strike. R. Douglas Lloyd recalls:

*“My father had little choice, as manager, but to side with management, although in large part his sympathies lay with the workers in his own factory whom he felt to be his friends...”*

*When this unfortunate strike, with its psychological fallout was coupled with the equally unfortunate management decisions described in my father’s text, the operations of Plant 90 became less and less viable...It was merely a matter of time before Plant 90 would disappear from the scene, merged with another Continental plant, built on Keele Street, in the suburbs, north of the city.”*

Plant 90 closed in 1967, and all employees were transferred to a new location, Plant 483, which opened in Concord Ontario that same year.

### THE EX-CONS

Continental Can employees at Plant 90 were a close-knit community and had a regular newsletter, “NI-N-TY News”. Many people made lifelong friendships and some even met their spouses while working here. . After Plant 90 closed, an informal network formed called the “Ex-Cons”, and connections were maintained for years. In 1995, the “Ex-Cons” were invited to tour 401 Richmond and see what had become of their building.

The ‘Ex-Cons’ reunion and tour, 1995. ►  
From the 401 Richmond Collections.



◀ Far Left: Continental employees at work.  
From the 401 Richmond Collections.





## Surviving the Decline

**It was a difficult time for 401 Richmond** between 1967 and 1994. The neighbourhood was run-down as industry moved out of the downtown core to the suburbs. 401 Richmond was neglected: thefts and break-ins were not uncommon, ownership switched hands several times, and renovations inside the building covered up many of the original features. The garment district was much quieter then, with few amenities in the vicinity. Building vacancies increased, and property owners demolished old buildings, replacing them with parking lots.



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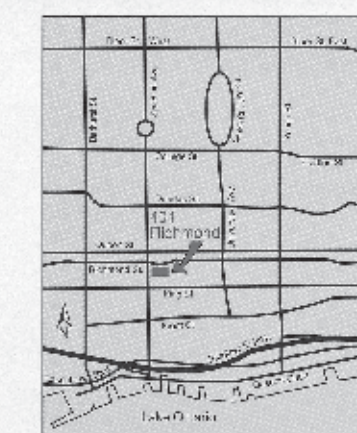
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### ZONING OUT

During this time, 401 Richmond was zoned as industrial, which placed limitations on potential uses for the space. While it was about 40% occupied, much of the building was being used for warehousing or storage. Some spaces were used for offices and artist studios, forming the early stages of the mixed-use quality the building has fostered into today, but with little sense of community.

◀ Far left: Richmond Street facade, pre-renovation, c. early 1990's.

◀ Left: Leasing ad for building, pre-renovation, c. early 1990's.  
From the 401 Richmond Collections.





## 401 Richmond Reborn

Despite wide-spread scepticism and the biggest real estate market slump since the Great Depression, Margie Zeidler had a vision for how to breathe new life into 401 Richmond. As a board member then for Toronto Artscape, Margie was acutely aware of the major shortage of space for artists in the downtown area.

Margie studied Architecture at the University of Toronto in the 1970s and 80s. It was here that she first read the work of Jane Jacobs, treasured urban thinker, writer and

visionary, whose wisdom would become a cornerstone in Margie's thinking about communities, ultimately informing her vision for 401 Richmond.

*“The required reading in my first year included **Jane Jacobs’ The Death and Life of Great American Cities**. It blew me away, especially the chapter on old buildings – warehouses, factories, buildings that no longer served the purpose they once served...I’m talking about old buildings whose owners are no longer worried about paying the mortgages, so they can provide cheap rents for people with low earning power – the writer, the inventor, the artist. These buildings are neat parts of the city. I remember reading that ‘Old ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas*

*must use old buildings.’ Right away, I thought that could be a wonderful use for the old industrial buildings I love.”*

— Margie Zeidler, the Globe and Mail, August 2007

### THE PURCHASE

Margie had loved 401 Richmond even as a student. She often wandered the exterior of the building, through the alleyways, to view it from all sides, admiring the powerful presence of this massive industrial building, with its handsome brickwork and fine wooden windows.

In 1994, the price dropped to less than 10% of its value a few years prior. With the help and support of her family and many co-workers who shared a deep commitment to the ideas embodied in the vision for the building, Margie was able to save 401 Richmond from demolition.

And so it was that the 200,000 square

foot warehouse was purchased for just \$8 a square foot, beginning a journey that has earned the project honours, awards, praise and esteem both locally and internationally.

### COMMERCE, CULTURE, COMMUNITY

401 Richmond models itself on the ‘three C’s’ of Commerce, Culture and Community, three key components identified by the 401 team that foster social wealth, each one supporting the others. George Baird, former Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Toronto, has called this strategy enlightened micro-capitalism.

*“It’s an idea that you can create enterprises that*

*involve a lot of people, none of whom have a lot of capital, and modulate the cash flow arrangement to allow people to get a foothold. It’s a very creative economic and urban activity and a very precedent-setting one.”*

—George Baird, October 2005

Work began almost immediately to renovate and restore the building. Tenant spaces were reimaged. A small team formed 401 Richmond Ltd. to oversee operations. A building newsletter called “Update” began circulating regularly, and a sense of community began to really take shape.

### JANE JACOBS

Jane Jacobs (1916-2006) was an urbanist and activist whose writings championed a fresh, community-based approach to city building. She had no formal training as a planner, and yet her 1961 treatise, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, introduced ground-breaking ideas about how cities function, evolve and fail that now seem like common sense to generations of architects, planners, politicians, and activists.

Jacobs saw cities as ecosystems that had their own logic and dynamism which would change over time according to how they were used. With a keen eye for detail, she wrote eloquently about sidewalks, parks, retail design

and self-organization. She promoted higher density in cities, short blocks, local economies and mixed uses. Jacobs helped derail the car-centred approach to urban planning in both New York and Toronto, invigorating neighbourhood activism by helping stop the expansion of expressways and roads. She lived in Greenwich Village for decades, then moved to Toronto in 1968 where she continued her work and writing on urbanism, economies and social issues until her death in April 2006.

Excerpted from Janeswalk.org. Jane’s Walk is a walking conversation led by volunteers that creates a space for citizens to discuss what matters to them while learning more about their city and their neighbours.

▲ Above: Jane Jacobs attends the opening of Studio 123 Early Learning Centre, June 1999, pictured here with Margie Zeidler. From the 401 Richmond Collections.



Restoration begins. From the 401 Richmond Collections.



Staff members of 401 Richmond, 1996. From the 401 Richmond Collections.





## A Village in a Box

401 Richmond was partially leased when it was purchased in 1994. A mix of tenants were present, but they were segregated, cut off from each other by bolted doors and cold hallways. The regeneration plan envisioned instead, a dynamic **mixed-use space**, based on a neighbourhood model where people could get all that they needed under one roof (a 'Village in a Box' as was coined in a 1998 article by lawyer and 401 tenant Michael Cochrane). The mix would include both for-profits and not-for-profits, with a heavy focus on the arts, creating an environment that could incubate smaller organizations.

Zoning designations leftover from more industrial times permitted 401 Richmond the opportunity to invite artists and graphic designers (considered "industrial") to set up studios and offices in the building. By the mid-1990s, municipal discussions were underway to lift prohibitive zoning restrictions. The Kings Regeneration Initiative (referring to the King-Spadina and King-Parliament areas) was spearheaded by then Mayor Barbara Hall, and comprised a small group of urban players, including then Chief City Planner Paul Bedford, urban theorist Jane Jacobs, economist Gary

Stamm, developer Robert Eisenberg of York Heritage Properties, and architect and urban designer Ken Greenberg. By April 1996, an approved plan was underway to redevelop and reinvest in these areas. It permitted adaptive re-use of old buildings, and encouraged a wave of new economic activity in the area.

Dear David, November 24, 1995

Eighteen months ago our family bought an old warehouse at 401 Richmond Street West. At the time this 200,000 square foot building was less than half full and a dreary renovation had covered up all the spectacular architectural elements of the old industrial structure. Since then we have set about slowly restoring the building to its original dignity.

During the past year and a half we have leased the building to over 95% occupancy (130 tenants). Our aim has been to attract artists as well as businesses and organizations related to the arts. As a former board member of Artscape, I was acutely aware of the shortage of long-term, affordable space in the core of the city for the arts. Hence renovations have been carried out on a strict budget to ensure that this sector will not be priced out of the building, now or in the future.

We have had great success in attracting such tenants: V-Tape has moved here, Gallery 44, A Space and CAPO (Canadian Artists Representation, Ontario), the Electronic Café and Av Isaacs are all tenants. John Scott and Jeanne Thib have studios here as well.

Interestingly, we have managed to attract a wonderfully diverse group of tenants. Allen and Brian of O'Boy fame run a café at the front of the building. Esmeralda Enrique has her Academy of Spanish Dance in the basement. Circulace (you guessed it - they fix bicycles by day and show cinema at night) have a space, as well as the NRV Centre which runs the Web Network. We have graphic artists, fashion designers (and manufacturers) architects, film-makers, milliners, animators, sculptors, painters, photographers and more!

The idea of a strict mono-culture has been abandoned and the place has been turned into a veritable village - one use feeding the other.

I have included a sampling of our monthly newsletter to give you a flavour of 401 and the community that is developing here. Please feel free to come down and visit us some time, we (Lesley Soden, Sam Kump, Jane Roberts, Mike Moody or I) would be delighted to show you around.

Yours sincerely,  
Margie Zeitler

▲ Left: A hand-written letter from Margie, a personal invitation to tour the newly renovated building.

▲ Above, left: A party for tenants and friends is hosted at the rear of the building. An example of the vibrant community culture at 401.



401 veteran Mike Moody giving a tour of the rooftop greenhouse. From the 401 Richmond Collections.



Tenants enjoying the shade of the rooftop garden. From the 401 Richmond Collections.



Staff members of 401 Richmond, 2013. Staff photos are taken annually. From the 401 Richmond Collections.