77 King William Street was originally built in the mid-19th century as part of the E. & C. Gurney Company’s industrial complex located in the block bounded by John, Rebecca, Catharine and King William Streets. Brothers Charles and Edward Gurney established the E. & C. Gurney Company stove foundry at John and Rebecca Streets in 1843 shortly after arriving in Hamilton from Utica, New York.

In 1844, Alexander Carpenter established a tin and stoveware store at John and King William Streets. By 1845, the three men became partners in a firm known as the Gurney and Carpenter Iron Foundry. Alexander Carpenter retired from the business in 1863, after which time the Gurney brothers changed the name to the E. & C. Gurney Company (E.C.G.). The company acquired a number of branches across Canada over the next few years, including Dundas, Montreal and Winnipeg. In 1868, the company bought out the John McGee Phoenix Foundry Company of Toronto and the E. & C. Gurney Company became the largest stove manufacturer in Canada.

A four-storey office building and warehouse were added to Hamilton’s John and Rebecca Street location in 1875, and a few years later the company bought up the remaining buildings on the block, now covering the entire area bounded by John, King William, Rebecca and Catharine Streets. After Edward Gurney passed away in 1883, his shares were bought by John Tilden (Edward’s nephew by marriage), who worked his way up to a full partner of the company. When Charles Gurney died later that decade the company was dissolved and part of the assets were used to establish the Gurney, Tilden Company in Hamilton in the John Street Plant.

In 1910, The Gurney, Tilden Company was taken over by the Hamilton Stove and Heater Company. By the mid-20th century, the main office and building fronting into John Street North housed a variety of new businesses, including Victoria Leather and Hamilton Chewing Gum Limited, while Canada Coach Lines Limited operated their garage and repairs shop out of the central plant buildings.

The majority of the lot bounded by John, Rebecca, Catharine and King William Streets, where the Gurney, Tilden plant operated until 1910, is now a parking lot. The remaining building, located at 77 King William Street, is the former moulding shop, constructed in the mid-19th century and expanded in the early-20th century. In 1947, the building (formerly 87 King William Street) housed Grafton Garage, and Wentworth Radio & Auto Supply Company Limited operated out of the adjacent two-storey brick building to the west. By 1964, 87 King William Street housed the Hamilton Spectator’s garage in the first storey and the paper storage in the basement. Since then, the building has housed a variety of restaurants and nightclubs, including Brandy’s (circa 1988), Club 77 and Dirty Dogs Saloon (early 21st-century) and the Underground in the basement (early 21st-century).

Preliminary research compiled by the City of Hamilton’s Planning and Economic Development Department as part of the Downtown Hamilton Built Heritage Inventory, 2014.