

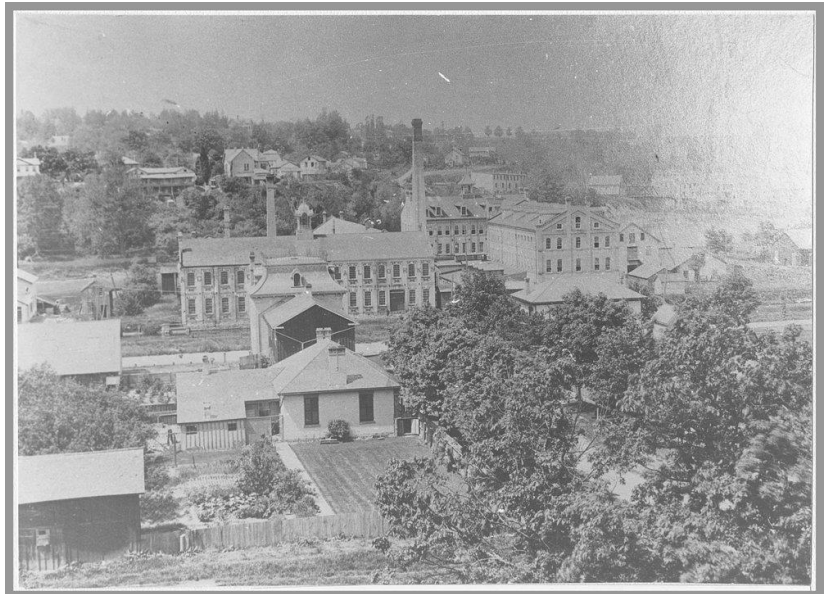


Paris Past

By
Chris Whelan

Our story begins along Willow Street where shops are being powered by the newly created dam and race way. The Paris Foundry and Agricultural Works of Mr. David Maxwell were established in 1859. The foundry reports a large business in Farming Implements and Machinery. Mr. Maxwell is the inventor of a patent change stop and an inversible feed thereon for straw cutters. From 30 to 40 hands are employed and a new building is erected. The business moved to St. Marys Ontario in 1888 Initially, farm equipment was the main focus, but eventually it produced plows, harrows, scufflers, binders, hay mowers, tedders, sulky rakes, hay loaders, root cutters, corn shellers, ringer washing machines, lawn mowers, food grinders and churns. During World War II, production was devoted to the manufacture of hand grenades. Following the war, it was unable to compete and ceased operation in 1964. The factory was demolished in 1987.

Meanwhile The Knitting Mills of Mr. John Penman were established in 1867, and are



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This photograph depicts a set of Willow Street shops and factories c. 1880-90. This section of the street is near the Willow Street raceway which provided these buildings with water-power. The long building at the left is the main shop of the Maxwell Agricultural Works.

devoted to knitting shirts and drawers, all kinds of ladies' and gent's hose, ladies' and children's mitts, gaiters and all kinds of stocking yarns. A building was erected by Penman's beside the Maxwell building as it was directly across from Penman's Number 2 Mill and once Maxwell's moved to St. Mary's the building became the Maxwell Wing of Penman's.

The Walker Press was started in 1909 and by 1915 it had moved into the Penman's building on Yeo Street and eventually took over the Maxwell wing in 1920. As this thriving printing plant

continued to grow and expand so did the building. It would be 60 years before another business would take over this space and many residents of Paris today still have vivid memories of the days spent living and working in and around the once famous Walker Press.

We asked the many people who were there at the time or had friends or relatives that worked at the Walker Press to share their stories with us. The following are some of the more notable submissions that we received.

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THE WALKER PRESS

Past, Present & Future over the next few weeks The Paris Independent will explore the amazing history of 3 Yeo Street along with what may become of this historic building!

Submitted by Gord Labron

As a child I grew up on Walnut Lane directly behind the Walker Press. In my early days there was a parking lot at the south end of the Walker Press before they put an addition on. We used to ride our tricycles there. When the addition was put on the building came right up tight to Walnut Lane. This wall made a great backstop for a lacrosse ball either using a lacrosse stick or just throwing the rubber ball against the building and catching it on the rebound with a baseball glove. The wall also worked well as a backstop for pucks as I practiced being a goalie and my brother would shoot pucks at me. If we tried this during the week some guy would come out the side door and make us stop. Guess we made too much noise. Weekends we were free and clear. There was only one window facing Walnut Lane and it hinged out. As kids we would go there and stick our heads in and usually Mr. Creedon I believe his name was, would be working near it and he would give us all some transfers that we took home and our mothers would iron them on our tee shirts. We hardly ever missed



Located on 3 Yeo street, with the oldest portion of the structure – the Maxwell wing – built in 1872, The Walker Press (est. 1910) moved into the Penman Wing in 1915. Expanding into the Maxwell wing in 1920, connecting the two buildings in the process, they operated for over 60 years, printing everything from gift coupons to royal portraits.

getting them from him. Mr. Martin had a red setter dog I believe it was and he would let it out of his office onto the roof. The dog would run over to the edge where it could hear us playing and bark at us. There was a low spot on the roof maybe six feet high and we would try and get the dog to jump down. Clearly the dog was smarter than us because it never did. This low section was a spot we were able to get on the roof when needed to get balls we lost up there. This had to be done on weekends

so we would not get caught. The only downside of the expanded Walker Press was that when the addition was put on the staff parking lot was gone. The town I assumed then dug into the hill behind our home to make parking for the staff. We used to be able to toboggan down the hill right up to the fence in our backyard fence. With the hill being dug out there was now and still is a big drop off if you slid down the hill. Too high to slide over and get hurt.
G. Labron

Paris Residents Share Their Memories of the Walker Press

Submitted by: Dan Balkwill

My Dad Joe Balkwill worked there as a pressman for ever .My Mom was a receptionist Brenda Balkwill for many years also. Vern Martin was the owner, he had a horse in Queens plate called “Dance to Market” he let me ride him as a child on his farm in Paris. My parents always talked and still do about the hard work but great people and the feeling as at the end of the day they looked out for each other .I still remember the smell of the ink when I would visit. I remember it being sad when it closed my dad did not want to work else where but did. My aunt Arline Adam's also worked there she was a hard worker also. God bless a little man with a big heart Nipper, he did odd jobs around there he touched everyone's heart and babysat me often if mom had to work a little late or brought me a lunch when I forgot to make it . I am sure it was not perfect but I am sure there are few work places these days like it.

Submitted by: Amber Martin

My mom, Isobel Gecas (nee Walkom) worked there in the office. I am pretty sure my sister still has the high chair my mom was given as a gift when she went on maternity leave when I was born (and is now using for her own grandchildren, talk about good Canadian made furniture).



Submitted by: Dodee Raycraft

“I remember Mel Hadley using the linotype to make all the neighbour kids their names on a strip of metal. To read your name you would have to hold it up to a mirror. Was fascinating watching my dad run the presses and watching the papers going through the presses . I still remember the paint fumes. My dad got hurt and ended up in the hospital with sandbags on sides of his head to keep him from moving his head ,also had his eyes covered for days. Eye injuries were taken very seriously. In the end all ended well.”

Submitted by: Linda ML

“It was my first job. \$2.00 I believe 1972 we had piece of wood dowel and a skid of posters. We rolled them up and put them into a plastic

bag. Oh yeah, the posters were of the 1972 Canada Russia hockey series!!”

Submitted by: Dorothy Spencer

“I have a great story, In 1947 or 48 I was the calendar girl for Purina Chicken food. It was photographed by I believe I remember his name correctly. Mr. Brontmier, at the Walker Press. Our Grade six teacher and he taught us how to write beautiful penmanship, If I have the spelling incorrect please correct me.”

