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**Manufacturing Locations in Canada:  
The Identification and Evaluation of Significant Multiple-  
Industry Manufacturing Complexes**

**Les emplacements manufacturiers au Canada:  
L'identification et l'évaluation des importants complexes  
manufacturiers comportant plusieurs industries**

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By/par

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David McConnell

Jean-Claude Parent



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A Report prepared for the Historic  
Sites and Monuments Board of Canada

Un rapport préparé pour la  
Commission des lieux et  
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## Summary

The Historic Manufacturing Centres Project was undertaken to identify, describe, and evaluate significant surviving multiple-industry manufacturing complexes in Canada built before World War II. The project was intended to complement a number of single industry studies being done for the National Historic Sites Systems Plan by focusing on the manifestations of the more general theme of the industrialization of Canada.

From the onset the project was driven by concerns relating to heritage preservation, concentrating on discovering significant extant factory buildings from before World War II. The steps involved in identifying the most significant extant, multiple-industry complexes in Canada can be summarized as follows:

1. Ranking in order of importance based on six census criteria of the 511 manufacturing cities, towns, and villages of Canada, 1880-1 to 1939;
2. Selection from the above list of the 60 most important cities, towns, and villages in which to determine the existence of pre-World War II manufacturing establishments;
3. Conducting documentary research to identify the historical existence of these establishments;
4. Conducting field research to determine the current status of these establishments;
5. Creation of a data base to record information on 1841 extant manufacturing establishments;
6. Creation of maps plotting the location of the extant manufacturing establishments;
7. Identification of 267 manufacturing complexes on the maps;
8. Development of criteria by which to evaluate the complexes;
9. Selection of the 15 largest complexes for evaluation;
10. Evaluation of the 15 largest complexes made up of 352 manufacturing establishments.

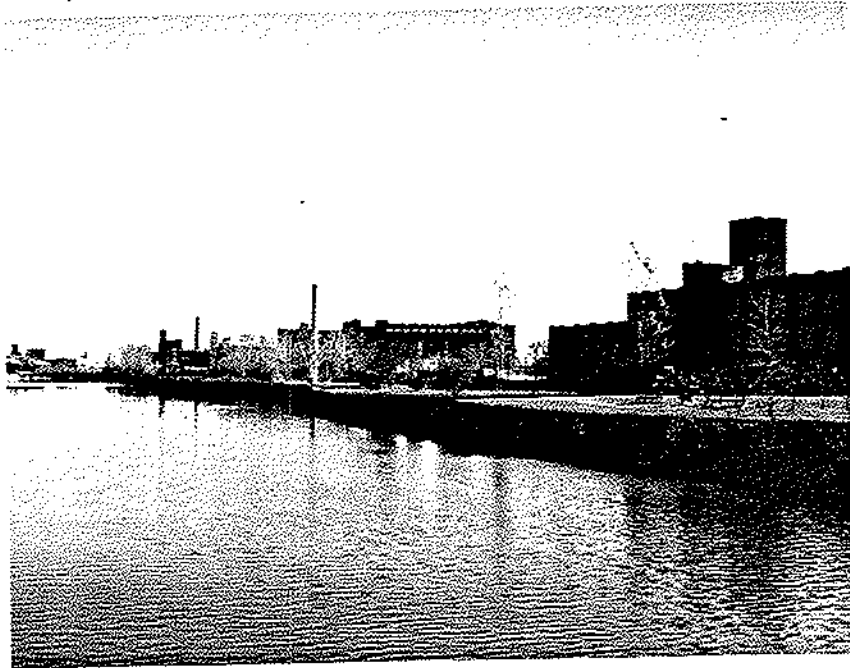


Fig. 1. The Lachine Canal complex: from left to right are Northern Electric (1913) and the Canadian Bag Co. (1913).



Fig. 2. The Lachine Canal complex: from left to right Redpath sugar refinery (1892) and Belding-Corticelli silk factory (1884).

The 15 largest complexes were evaluated according to eight criteria relating to the size of the complex, the variety of manufacturing, the age of the factories, a well-balanced representation of industries, the importance of the industries, the length of time of production, and the importance of the city. Although the study had initially included cities from Sydney to Victoria, the 15 largest complexes were in Ontario and Quebec: 11 in Ontario (6 in Toronto, 1 each in Hamilton, Kitchener, Galt, Brantford, and Windsor) and 4 in Quebec (2 in Montréal and 1 each in Québec City and Sherbrooke). Of these, the strongest by far was the complex in Montréal on the Lachine Canal.

At its November 1987 meeting, following consideration of a preliminary report entitled "Manufacturing Locations in Canada: An Approach to the Identification and Study of Urban Manufacturing Complexes", the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recommended that "Manufacturing is a major theme in Canadian history, which should be commemorated on a scale appropriate to its significance." Further, it recommended that there should be a "focus ...on surviving industrial complexes (dating from the 1880-1940 period), as defined in the paper "Manufacturing Locations in Canada...." rather than on isolated resources."<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the recommendations of the Board the following report has been prepared.

The report is made up of two parts: Part I consists of an introduction, a discussion of methodology, and an evaluation and description of the 15 largest complexes. Part II is supplementary, one section describing the resources that were discovered in the 60 cities from Sydney to Victoria and another discussing and analysing the data base that was created.

In its consideration of this report, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board is asked to advise on the following:

- Is the Board comfortable with the 15 candidate complexes that have been identified for consideration as being of potential national significance?
- If so, does the Board wish to limit the field to less than the 15 identified complexes? If this is the case, which complexes would the Board identify for inclusion on a shorter list?
- Are there additional topics that the Board would like to see investigated by the National Historic Sites

Directorate, either as part or as a product of this project? The Board has already considered studies on direct-drive water power and the textile industry, which are related to the general topic of this paper.

- Since the Board advises the Minister on the national significance of historic places and on the form(s) of commemoration for recognizing that significance, what additional information does the Board require to advise on whether any manufacturing complex merits a designation of national historic importance (i.e., warrants recognition as a national historic site)? A Phase II Systems Planning evaluation of the candidate complexes (15 or a lesser number) would differ from a traditional Phase II study, given that preliminary site identification and evaluation have already been done. A Phase II study could include consideration of related structures in its evaluation - the power source (water, steam, and/or electricity), the transportation system (harbour, river, canal, rail, trunk road, airway), housing of managers and workers, and other directly related educational, medical, or social facilities as part of an overall consideration of planning factors. Systems Planning will address these matters at the fall Board meeting.

Part I

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the frequent images of its vast wilderness spaces, Canada is an industrialized country; by 1940 manufacturing provided almost  $\frac{1}{4}$  of total output and a similar proportion of total employment. The origins and exact nature of Canada's industrial revolution are matters of some controversy among economic historians, but there is statistical evidence that from about the mid-nineteenth century manufacturing underwent radical change. Along with other sectors of the Canadian economy it grew in absolute value and, although its share of the GNP increased only moderately, proportionately by the 1920s it had surpassed primary industry which had been steadily declining since the 1860s when it produced more than 50% of the GNP.

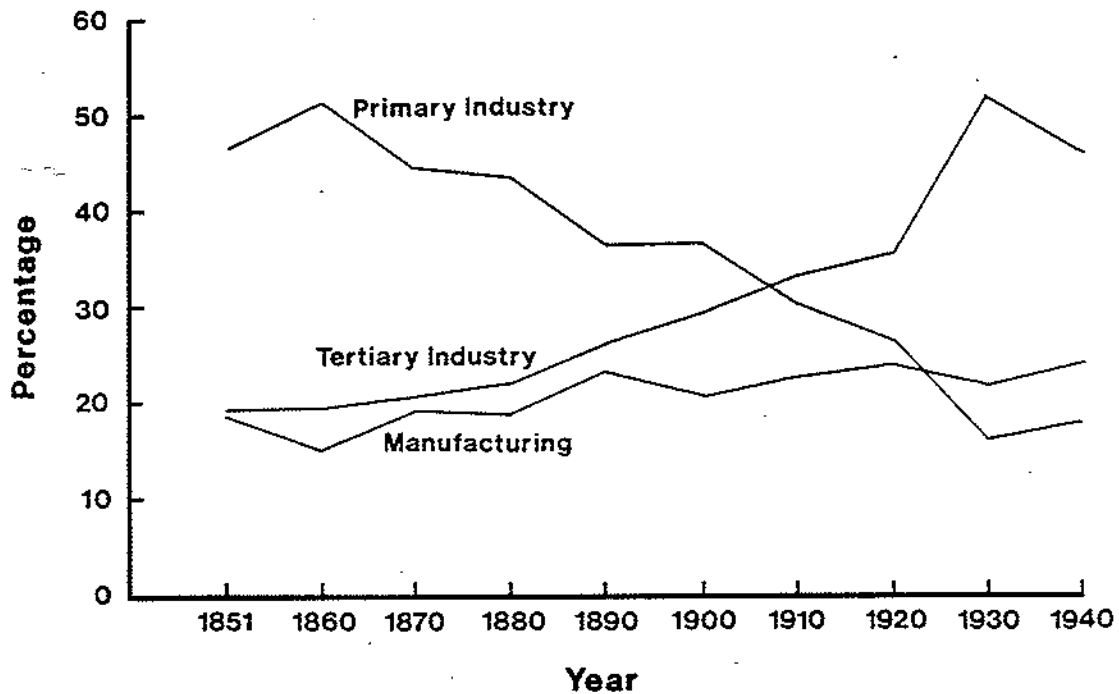


Fig. 3 Sectoral Distribution of GNP, 1851-1940  
 (Derived from William L. Marr and Donald G. Patterson,  
Canada: An Economic History (Toronto: Macmillan of  
 Canada, 1980), p. 22.)

Manufacturing has been defined as "the mechanical or chemical transformation of inorganic or organic substances into new products, whether the work is performed by power driven machines or by hand, whether it is done in a factory or in a worker's home, and whether the products are sold at wholesale or at retail."<sup>1</sup> This definition includes primitive or household manufacturing; workshop or community manufacturing; and complex, modern manufacturing. The first kind is characterized by the hand processing of local raw materials for home consumption. The second (which is an extension of the first), while still essentially local, draws its raw materials from, and sells the final product, further afield; power may still be largely hand, although animals, wind, and water may be used in some instances. In contrast, modern manufacturing is marked by the increased use of mechanical power, large units of production in terms of both size of plant and size of work force, large capital requirements, and the development of transportation networks both to bring in raw materials from far away and to distribute the final product over long distances. Household and workshop manufacturing have been going on since time immemorial. In Canada, the archaeological record reveals that prehistoric cultures manufactured tools and weapons (usually of stone), ornaments, and pottery,<sup>2</sup> while in French colonial times gristmills, breweries, an iron works, etc., were established. But it is with the manifestations of the third kind of manufacturing that this study is concerned, with the existing evidence of the transformation of the Canadian economy from a pre-industrial to an industrial one.

The first industrial revolution occurred in Great Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and subsequently was extended to western Europe and North America. It may be appropriate to speak of each country experiencing its own industrial revolution or it may be more fitting to see each country sharing in the industrializing process that began in Great Britain about 1780. Regardless of the terminology used to describe it, the Canadian experience began relatively late compared to Great Britain and the United States and followed a pattern distinctly its own.

The older historiography of the staple thesis of Canadian economic development, with its preoccupation with commerce and exports, has emphasized the first decade of the twentieth century as the decisive period of Canadian industrial development and has viewed the last three decades of the nineteenth century as a period of economic depression and stagnation.<sup>3</sup> More recent statistical studies have



modified this interpretation and have discovered significant industrial growth beginning by about mid-century and extending through the decades of the "long depression."<sup>4</sup> Although manufacturing had been developing on the Welland Canal as early as the 1830s, some historians have suggested that the birthplace of the industrial revolution in Canada was on the banks of the Lachine Canal in the late 1840s and '50s when factories were built there to take advantage of the waterpower of the newly enlarged canal.<sup>5</sup> According to O.J. Firestone's estimates, manufacturing amounted to 18% of the GNP in 1851, dropped to 15% in 1860 and rose to 19% in 1870.<sup>6</sup> In the post-Confederation period, G.W. Bertram has used different statistical formulations to argue that "the total manufacturing sector has shown a fairly steady and rapid rate of growth over the 87-year period 1870-1957," the average annual rate of growth being 4.2 per cent compounded. In the three decades from 1870 to 1900 only in the 1890s was the growth rate below the average and in the first decade of the twentieth century, the period of the wheat boom, it was well above average. Of the remaining three decades before World War II, only the 1920s, especially the period 1926-29, showed substantial growth.<sup>7</sup>

While manufacturing was growing in importance, it was also changing in structure.

Table 1: Top 7 Major Groups of the Standard Industrial Classification (1948) by Gross Value of Production 1870 and 1939

1870		1939		
Rank	Major Group	%	Major Group	%
1	Foods & Beverages	29	Foods & Beverages	25
2	Wood Products	19	Non-Ferrous Metals	9
3	Leather Products	13	Iron & Steel Products	9
4	Iron & Steel Products	11	Paper Products	8
5	Clothing	7	Trans. Equipment	7
6	Trans. Equipment	5	Clothing	7
7	Textile Products	4	Wood Products	6
	Other	12	Other	29
	Top 4	72		51
	Top 7	88		71

An analysis of the percentage make-up of above listings reveals that the economy became more diversified. It is also clear that Foods & Beverages remained the dominant major group over the period. The greatest losers were

Leather Products which dropped from third place out of the top 7 to 13th and Wood Products which dropped from second place to 7th. Textile Products dropped out of the top 7 but only to eighth place. Those major groups that gained were Non-Ferrous Metal Products and Paper Products; these gains reflect the growth in the twentieth century of non-ferrous metal smelting and refining and of pulp and paper.

In an attempt to get below the major group classification, tables were drawn up and an outline history was compiled to trace the growth or decline of the top 40 sub-groups of the Standard Industrial Classification from 1870 to 1939; i.e. to see which of the top 40 industries were responsible for the major group's performance. Because of changes in terminology from decade to decade, the combining of some sub-groups, and the breaking apart of others, the creation of tables of sub-groups consistent for the period 1870-1939 was not possible; in particular the Iron and Steel Products sub-groups proved especially difficult to trace from decade to decade. Despite this problem, ranking of the top 40 sub-groups by gross value of production decade by decade allows for some observations.<sup>8</sup>

The continuing dominance of Foods and Beverages rested mainly on flour and grist mill products and when this sub-group began to decline slightly meat packing and cheese and butter production, which were rising dramatically in importance by 1900, served to reinforce that dominance. As well, throughout the period the products of bakeries - breads, biscuits, and confectionery - remained a significant component of Foods and Beverages. The primary manufacturing of saw mills was responsible for Wood Products' importance, but it declined quickly after 1910. The most important sub-groups of Leather Products were boots and shoes and tanneries, both of which, with harness and saddlery, began a severe decline after 1900. Iron and Steel Products maintained a fairly consistent position; early on industries such as agricultural implements, machine shop products, and tools were important and it was not until the late 1890s and first decade of the twentieth century that heavy iron and steel achieved some importance in contrast to the classical pattern of the British industrial revolution. Transportation Equipment, which used iron and steel inputs, also maintained a relatively stable position, dominated by locomotives and rolling stock, which experienced periods of growth in the 1880s, from 1900 to 1910, and in the 1920s, and by the automobile industry after 1910. The clothing industry grew in importance until about 1900, slipping back to about its 1870 level by 1939. Textiles followed a similar pattern. Its early history was dominated by woollen

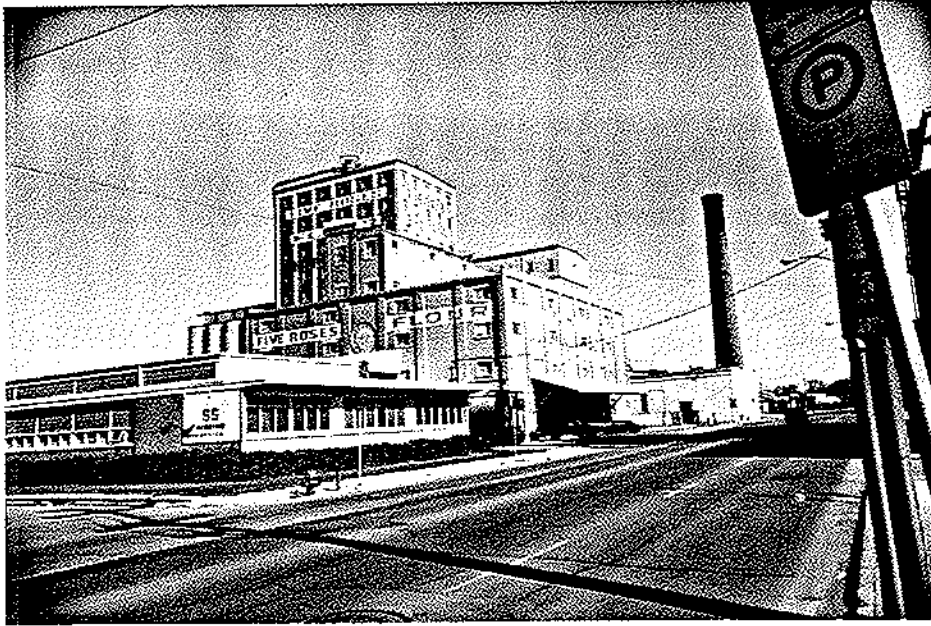


Fig. 4. The Ogilvie Flour Mill in Winnipeg, Manitoba, (1880s) is a representative of the leading major group, Food and Beverages.

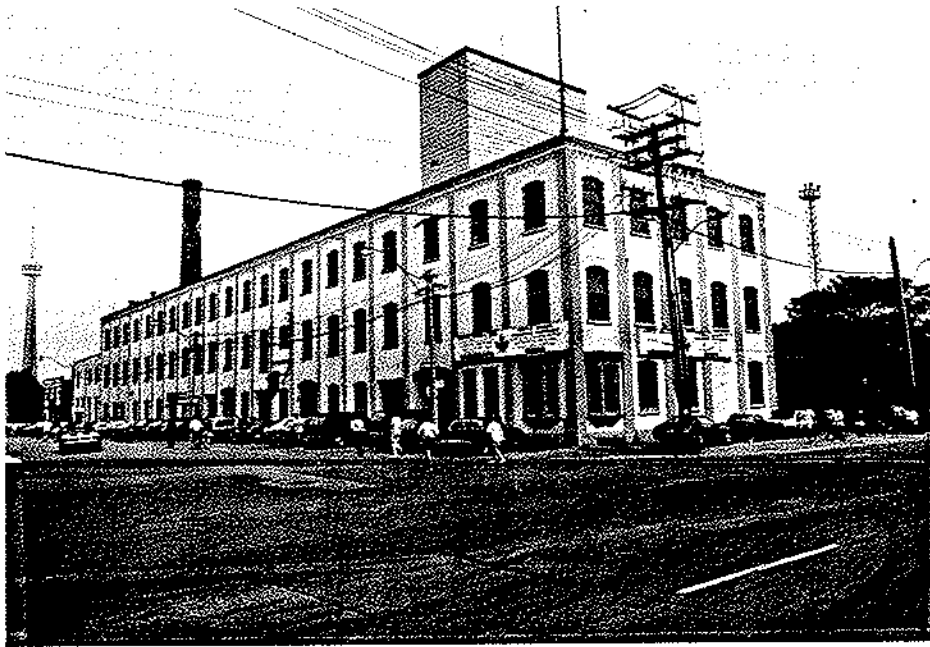


Fig. 5. John B. Smith's planing mill in Toronto (1889) represents the Wood sector, the second ranked major group in terms of value of product over the 70-year span.

mills. After the mid 1880s cotton mills became increasingly important. The two major groups which rose dramatically into prominence, Non-Ferrous Metal Products and Paper Products (dominated by pulp and paper) were twentieth century industries, although their origins could be traced back into the previous century. Non-ferrous metal smelting and refining's rise depended on technological innovations in separating the metal from impurities, and pulp and paper, the technology of which was developed after 1850, depended on massive American demand, especially in the 1920s.

As the industrial structure of Canada was changing so the industrial landscape also changed. The country was becoming increasingly urbanized: urban areas were growing in population at a greater rate than the growth of the population generally. In 1851, about 13% of the population lived in urban areas; by 1941, the proportion was over one-half the population.<sup>9</sup> Accompanying urban growth was the growth of manufacturing and manufacturing grew the fastest in the largest cities. There were more firms and the firms were becoming larger; large factories came more and more to be a significant component of the urban landscape. The technology of steam power also implied a change in scenery as increasingly railway lines crisscrossed the countryside, especially in southwestern Ontario in the decades after Confederation. Steam plants began to supplement or take over from the older water driven technology and by the turn of the century electric power stations and power lines were becoming increasingly obvious in the landscape.

The explanation and the mechanisms of Canadian industrialization are still matters of controversy. The growing importance of agriculture in southwestern Ontario both as a means of providing an export crop and as a growing and prosperous market seems to have been important throughout much of the last half of the nineteenth century. The growth of the 1860s has been accounted for as a product of the railway boom of the 1850s, the incidental protection of the Galt-Cayley tariff, reciprocity, and the American Civil War. The steady growth of the post-Confederation period has been attributed to matters such as entrepreneurial spirit, technological innovation aided by the Patent Act, government commercial policy as exemplified in the National Policy tariff, the mania of municipal bonusing and subsidies of the 1880s and '90s, foreign direct investment, and the railway building of the 1880s. The economic expansion of the first decade of the twentieth century relates directly to the Klondike gold rush, prairie settlement, and the wheat boom which provided the linkages