

507 King St. East

FROM INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURING TO STYLISH CO-WORKING

By Coralina Lemos, Corktown Historian and Author | corktownhistory.com

Standing at the southeast intersection of King Street and Virgin Place is a three storey, plus basement, former factory building that was purposely designed and built for the Canada Decalcomania Company. Established in 1911, the factory initially operated from a location farther west in the city.



photo courtesy: Hullmark

From the start, its founding directors saw the value and potential growth in the production of industrial transfer lettering for wagons, store windows, transport vehicles, name plates, etc. Compared to hand painted sign transfers could be mass produced much faster, accurate and at affordable prices.

In 1918 company officers incorporated under a Dominion Charter with its head office in Toronto. Its directors included George Meyercord, president of Meyercord Company based in Chicago, Illinois, and co-founder director Alvin Johnson. Founded in the late 1880s, the Meyercord Company was not the first to manufacture decals in the United States but was one of a handful of companies that dominated the industry south of Canada's border.

Two years following its incorporation a vacant warehouse was purchased from the Dominion Register Company for the purpose of constructing a detached factory for the manufacturing of decalcomania transfers of various designs, types and sizes. The contract was awarded to architect Henry J. Chown who had recently completed work on Willards Chocolates Company Limited on Dupont Street, and whose exterior closely resembled 507 King Street East.

The newly built plant in Corktown started to manufacture decals in 1921 and prospered with its production under one roof. A new wing was added in the 1930s according to local resident Bill McIlroy who started to work at the company at age 16 in 1946. Despite the years that have past, Bill recalls some of the "shop talk" that happened among fellow coworkers.

The Canada Decalcomania Company went on to become the largest producer and designers of decals in Canada with subsidiaries in England, Australia and sales agents throughout the provinces. Eventually the word 'Decal', a product tradename, became synonymously associated with its parent company resulting in its name often being shorten to Canada Decal. "Are your employees' cars identified? Security precautions make it advisable that cars, of company workers, be quickly identified...Decal transfers are the most satisfactory and economical."

Outgrowing its premise on King East, the company moved in 1968 to a much larger and modern facility in Scarborough where it produced decals for major charge cards, soft drink companies, aircrafts, farm machinery, trademark insignia,

and so on. Consequently, its success did not go unnoticed as in 1981 Canada Decalcomania was acquired by CCL Industries Incorporated.

In the mid-1980s the building was purchased by Scott A. Martin, the late grandfather to Derreck and Samuel Martin (brothers) who started East Room.

Folks awaiting the unveiling of the 507 King St East at 507 King Street East, may appreciate to know that this co-work and event space is expected to open its doors sometime during the first quarter of 2023. This is the latest update by executive Mitch Gillin of Hullmark, a company whose portfolio of properties primarily focus on the adaptive reuse of existing structures while modernizing interiors and keeping them from landfill. Extensive renovations have made sure to highlight exterior architectural features that include stone lintels, sills and decorative motif work. Windows have been upgraded and inside, East Room clients will have access to modern office space, boardrooms, kitchens and a rooftop lounge. This, along with the efficient use of the existing building will help support Corktown's distinct main street character and legacy for years to come.