



# Built in Brockville

Accounts of Local Historic Architecture  
by **Doug Grant**

## The Dunham Block

*connected with the Robert Wright Co. for 33 years and with other major retailers for an additional 52 years.*

**51 King Street West, cor. Broad St. Built 1892-93**  
designed by **George A. Allan**, Brockville Architect.

On this important corner stands a large brick and terra cotta structure which has housed some of Brockville's largest department stores from the time of its construction. Built on land acquired in 1811 by Charles Dunham, an early merchant and innkeeper, the **Dunham Block** was erected in 1892-93 by his descendants as an



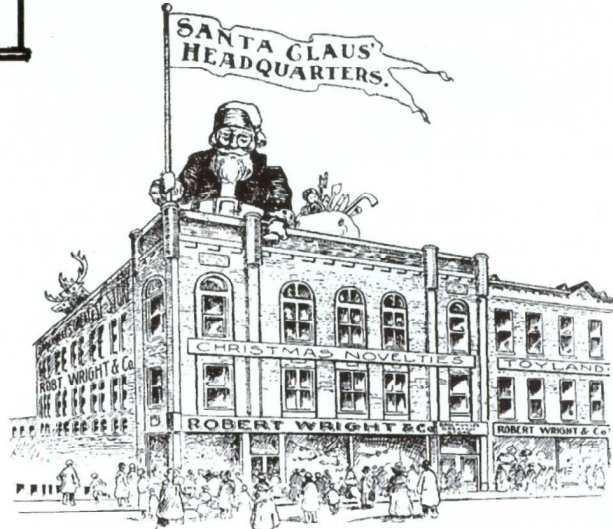
*Relatively new when this photo was taken. The Dunham Block has held this prominent spot on the main street at the corner of Broad St. for 116 years.*

investment property. The present building replaced an earlier brick one which had been Dr. George Dunham's office and drug store until the 1870s.

The new building was partially financed by a \$11,000 mortgage from Brockville financier, **Samuel Flint** who also owned the brick buildings to the west, which were previously put up in 1888. The facilities were built to the requirements of dry goods merchant, Robert Wright who moved his store the **Robert Wright & Co.** from the west end, and took an initial fifteen-year lease of the ground floor and basement. The Dunham



*The Canadian Department Stores was a subsidiary of the T. Eaton Co. This business took the place of the Wright store in 1926.*



*The artist son of the Wright family was Robbie L. Wright who no doubt was the creator of this Christmas promotion.*

family secured a second large mortgage for \$5000 from industrialist, Newton Cossitt to complete the project. The office space upstairs in the new building was first rented to the Bell Telephone Co. and the Canada Life Insurance Company .

Mr. Wright had grown up in the mercantile business, working for George Hutcheson from boyhood, until he formed a partnership with James Moore in the dry goods firm, Moore & Wright in 1870.

**The Robert Wright Co.** remained a landmark here until 1926, when they sold out to the T. Eaton Co. which operated a subsidiary business here, the Canadian Department Stores Ltd. In 1966, Walker Stores Ltd. moved in and remained here until bought out by Marks & Spencer, who in turn closed their business in January 1978.



*George A. Wright was the 2nd son of Robert Wright Sr. He became the manager and advertising head of the Robert Wright & Co. under his father. After the family sold their business in 1926, George became a County Court Magistrate. He was also known as a self-published amateur poet.*

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